











AN EDITOR'S RETROSPECT



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# EDITOR'S RETROSPECT

FIFTY YEARS OF NEWSPAPER WORK

BY

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EDITOR OF THE 'SCOTSMAN'

London

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To J. T. C.

MY SON

THIS BOOK



## PREFATORY NOTE

TWICE in my life I have attempted to keep a diary. In each case the diary was neglected after a few months of diligent care. The months during which the diaries continued were times of political excitement,—years apart. All my life I have kept notes of interesting conversations with more or less notable persons ; that is, of conversations which interested me. I have a fairly retentive memory. I have had more than fifty years' experience of newspaper work. These are my equipments for the production of this book. It is a plain writing down of recollections, of experiences, of conversations. It leaves much untold. Some things in it may have been extenuated ; nothing has been set down in malice.

C. A. C.

EDINBURGH, *August* 1896.





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## CHAPTER I

Wooden press days—The journalist—Newspapers and newspaper work in the old days and the new—Improved machinery—The old and the new journalists—Some old editors—Liquor and newspaper work.

THERE can be few journalists now in active work who have seen a newspaper of good size and fair circulation printed on a wooden press. I have. It is long ago ; but the memory of it is with me yet. Recollections of the past, even in regard to newspapers, may not be unpleasant in themselves ; but they are vivid reminders of a long-past youth, and these are not altogether a comfort. For myself, I am inclined to agree with Moore in this matter—

Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning,  
Her clouds and her tears are worth evening's best light.

Still there are some compensations, always provided that your years have been fairly spent. If it be good to use your life in hard work, most journalists ought to have a respectable record. For my years have taught me that in comparison with other pursuits journalism makes more demands on the worker than almost any other calling. Perhaps we

are all inclined to magnify our own office ; but when allowance has been made for this in my case I adhere to the conclusion just stated. The journalist may not, strictly speaking, scorn delights and live laborious days. He has his share of pleasures—when he can find time to enjoy them. Still, as a rule, other people's pleasures make work for him, while they do not always bring him friends. He must work nights as well as days. He must be patient and enduring. He must be prepared to sacrifice home comforts in the service of the public. If his work be daily journalism, it begins when it ends. The publication of one paper is the starting-point for the next. The completion of one task is the beginning of another. The strain is never relaxed, except at the cost of inefficiency or neglect, or the tightening of it on others.

In the days of that old wooden press which I remember, newspaper life was easier, even for those who had to produce daily papers. The electric telegraph was not. Railways were in their infancy. Posts were slow. You could discuss a piece of news without troubling yourself as to any possible modification of it in the next hour or the next twenty-four hours. Weekly papers represented the great bulk of the journalism of the day. They could be compiled leisurely, and no haste was necessary in getting them to press. So to speak, there was for them no "latest news." It had all come to hand hours before the post closed. When restless spirits began to look after later news, the race commenced

that has landed us where we are. Australia is as near to us as London then was to Birmingham. The Houses of Parliament are at our doors in Edinburgh. A whisper in a European court is heard in every town in the United Kingdom. News from India is published here an hour before the time at which it was despatched.

All this has revolutionised journalism. The old wooden press has gone. The Cowper machine has gone. The old journalistic methods have gone. The newspaper has had to keep time with the railway and the electric telegraph. It is not often printed from type. The invention of the paper process of stereotyping has added millions to the circulation of newspapers. In the old wooden press days, and in the days of improved machinery that followed, the printing had to be done from the type, and it went on at a slow and lumbering pace. Only one side of a sheet could be printed in a single operation, and only one machine could be used. By the adoption of the stereotyping process, it became possible to start several machines, and in that way several thousand copies could be printed in an hour ; but on one side only. The other side had to be printed afterwards. Thus every sheet had to go twice through the press. This crippled production, and new presses had to be invented. Now a single machine will print between twenty and thirty thousand copies an hour on both sides. Rolls of paper are at one end of the machine. At the other end there is an incessant outpouring of newspapers,

folded and ready to go into the hands of the reader. The machine will do more than this. Instead of printing a single sheet only, it will print three sheets for the one copy of the paper, place them in position and paste them together. Thus larger papers can be produced than could be issued of old, and hundreds can be printed in the time formerly required to print one. Labour is vastly lessened in proportion to the work done. Yet there are at least a hundred workers employed on newspapers nowadays for one similarly employed fifty years ago.

The changes have not been confined to mechanical appliances. The men employed on journalistic work are not what they were. I am not going to pretend that there was a golden age of journalism. It is altogether otherwise. Journalism never was so good as it is now ; and it will be better. There are more able men engaged in newspapers now than there were in the wooden press days. I am a disbeliever in the giants of old times. I don't believe that Sterling or Black could have earned his daily bread as a journalist now. They could command thunderous sentences : they could not command agility. Perhaps the American joker carried my opinion to an extreme length when he said that Shakspeare would not make a newspaper man—he lacked the necessary fancy and imagination. But the fact remains that for the most part the journalists of fifty years ago could not have done the work of the journalists of to-day. Nay, the point may be pressed further. Not only could they not have



done present-day newspaper work, but present-day newspaper men can and do produce better work than came from the old men. Nobody need accept this opinion unless he chooses : there it is, and it will be found difficult of disproof.

It may be fully admitted that the men of fifty years ago—that is, the best among them—did most excellent work—for their time. They were the best for doing what had to be done. Journalism, like other things, illustrates the great truth of the appearance and survival of the fittest. It also illustrates the other form of this principle—that the poet is born, not made. The wise doctor is born, not made. The successful merchant is born, not made. The great lawyer is born, not made. So is the journalist. It does not follow that there are none but born journalists. There are many in the calling that have been made, and badly made. It is the same with doctors, and lawyers, and even with the writers of verses. It has always been the same. The old journalists did great work—of its kind ; and for the most part they did it without training. I remember able newspaper men who had been tailors, doctors, lawyers, ministers of religion. One of the shrewdest newspaper men I ever met had begun a successful career, after being a weaver, with four pennyworth of cheese. He built up a weekly paper and he made it one of the best in the country.

Another journalist of those days had been educated for a Roman Catholic priest, and had fallen

into the snare of marriage. He was a bad business man, but a good writer. In his later days he had failings. At one time he argued himself into the belief that the only proper food for man was eggs and green tea. He acted upon his belief for about six weeks, and then required a rest from journalistic work for a season. He was not insane. He wrote forcibly. He thought vigorously. He was a Free Trader when Free Trade was unfashionable. It is true he wrote his newspaper out of existence by persistently advocating the Peace Society and teetotalism. These were his latest beliefs, and he introduced them into everything he did. In this respect he was a reproduction of Mr. Dick. I have known him introduce the Peace Society into an article on high farming; and teetotalism into an article on Lord John Russell.

This same editor had not always been a teetotaler. He was a member of a club of which the editor of the rival paper in the town was also a member. They invariably met and drank together on the night before their papers went to press. Leading articles had all been written before eight o'clock in the evening. Dinner had been eaten at two o'clock in the afternoon. Supper became a necessity, and press night an excuse for not going home for it. Thus they met and fought their battles. One morning about two o'clock my editor came back to the office in a state of elation. As a rule he did not return, and I was surprised to see him. He produced from his pocket a proof of a

leading article, not his own. The rival editor had boasted a good deal and drunk more ; and in the process had produced the proof and left it in my editor's hands. That was why he had revisited the office. We did not go to press till eight o'clock in the morning. He had therefore plenty of time, and he wrote a short article answering that of his opponent, whose article was also quoted. There was a sensation next day ; but the rival editor kept silence.

It has been affirmed by advocates of total abstinence that strong drink destroys the ability to do good work. I am not prepared to discuss that question or to insist that the advocates of total abstinence are wrong. But the case of the rival editor of whom I have just spoken may be quoted against them. When I first remember him he was a reporter—one of the best I have ever met. It was at the time of the Free Trade agitation. The paper on which he was engaged favoured Free Trade. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden came to the town in which it was published, and were entertained at a banquet the evening before the paper's publication. A full report of the proceedings at the banquet had to appear in the paper. Only the one reporter was available. He went to the banquet and took copious notes and copious draughts of wine. When the banquet was over he could not stand. He was helped into a cab, driven to the office, carried upstairs to his desk. The editor was in agony. No report seemed possible. The reporter managed

to get his note-book out of his pocket and demanded, "Gimme pencil." A pencil was put into his fingers and he began to write. He produced five columns of speeches—a capital report; and it was in time for the publication of the paper.

As an editor he was not great—when he was sober. He seemed to know this. His practice was to write his articles in the day-time. They were dull enough then in all conscience. After he had finished them he went to the club of which I have spoken. In the short hours of next morning he returned, usually tipsy. Then he began to correct his proofs. He changed sentences. He introduced new ones, and he made them sparkle with humour. His corrections were all but illegible; but they were the salvation of his literary credit.

A predecessor of this editor was dull both drunk and sober. He was fond of writing essay-like articles which, it is safe to say, nobody could read. The paper was sinking under him, when one day he produced an article that set the town talking, and sold several hundred extra copies of the paper. The editor was complimented by everybody. He bore himself proudly. For several days he was or seemed to be a happy man. Then he collapsed. The rival paper in its next publication printed the article side by side with one from *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. They were identical. The editor had not changed a word. Two days thereafter the town knew him no more.

Still another editor of those days presents himself



to my mind. He was a clever fellow, who could write well and vigorously. What he had been previously I do not know. I believe that later he was appointed consul in Mexico or some other state in that part of the world. It was his practice to write his leading article or articles at home the night before publication. The rest of the week he did nothing. One night his articles had not come to hand at the office. Ten o'clock came; eleven; twelve; and still no sign of an article. There was commotion in the office; and at last a messenger was sent to the editor's house. He found him with a glass of brandy and water before him, and newspapers scattered about. There was no article written.

"What do you want?" asked the editor.

"The article for to-morrow."

"Didn't I send it?"

"No; at least it has not come to the office."

"Give me the *Times*."

The *Times* was found and handed to him, and with unsteady fingers he cut out one of its leading articles. This he stuck upon a sheet of paper, and then taking his pen wrote at the top, "What does the *Times* mean by this?" Nothing more.

In that form and with that introduction it appeared next morning as the editor's leading article.

## CHAPTER II

Reporting, good and bad—Pressure on reporters—An old experience  
—Some murder trials.

IT has been said by some old journalists and others that reporting is now a lost art. I do not profess to agree with the criticism. There is as good reporting now as ever there was. In quantity there is far more. Indeed that fact seems to be the basis of the criticism. Reporting, it is said, has become more mechanical and less intellectual. Anybody can write shorthand; and the extension of newspapers has brought many "bodies" forward as reporters who can do little else than write shorthand. There is an old story of one of these verbatim men who had been sent to report a speech. When he came back, the editor asked him how much the speech would make in length. "Three columns," he replied. "But we have not room for three columns," said the editor, "and it is not worth so much. You must put it into a column and a half." "Very well," was the reply; "which half of it will you have?" Condensation was for that man a lost art; and so it is with many of the reporters of to-day. Mr. Pitman has destroyed them as thinking beings, and has made them into machines.

There is a story of a great painter who, being asked with what medium he mixed his colours, replied, "With brains." So it is with good reporting: it is shorthand mixed with brains. Take half the reporters of the day and ask them when they come from a meeting what has been said. They can no more tell you without reference to their notes than they can fly. I have seen a reporter when he came out of the Gallery of the House of Commons put aside his notes and write a report of the speech he has heard without referring to them. It was not a verbatim report; but it was infinitely better, and in one sense truer, than a verbatim report. Some of the best reporters I have known could not write a word of shorthand. Especially was that the case in the old days. Still there were as good shorthand writers then as now, only they were not machines. It is true there was not the same pressure then as now. A reporter might have days in which to produce his account of a meeting. Now he must have it ready in a few hours at furthest after the meeting is over—perhaps in a few minutes. Then he had no trouble with the electric telegraph; now he has the operator waiting for him. Remembering all this, I am often surprised at the good work that is done.

Once, many years ago, I was sent to report a murder trial at Lincoln. There was no railway from my place—Hull—and no electric telegraph. I had to cross the river in a small steamboat; then take the coach and by it travel to Lincoln. A reporter for the rival paper was bent on the same mission.

A good deal of importance was attached to the trial, for a reason which may be told later. Both papers were published on the same day, and the question was which should have the better report. To my surprise I found when we had crossed the river that my opposing reporter had orders to take a post-chaise, and with changes of horses, get to Lincoln before the trial, and back afterwards quicker than the coach. This it had been thought would enable the composing staff of the paper to set a longer report than would be possible if the coach alone were taken. I felt aggrieved. I believed that on equal terms I could produce as good a report as he could; but if he was to get home hours before me, no good reporting of mine would avail. A crumb of comfort came to me when I learned that the steamboat across the river ran in conjunction with the coach; and no arrangement had been made for a special boat. I had just time to write a note to the editor of my paper suggesting that he should send over a special steamer to meet the coach the next day. As it turned out he did not adopt my suggestion. I got upon the coach, satisfied that I had done all that could be expected of me. The driver was a wooden-legged man, known as "Wooden-legged Tommy." There was a tradition that when he drove the coach there was sure to be rain. In this case there was rain. I sat beside him and shared the wet with him. We were at the first stage before my rival, and I suggested to Tommy that a little brandy and water would do him no



harm. He agreed with me, and we became close friends. I confided to him the difficulty as to my rival. "Oh," said he, "you leave that to me, sir. I'll mak' it all right." He declined to tell me what he meant, and I did not press for explanation.

The trial began that afternoon soon after we got to Lincoln. It did not finish that evening, and only came to a close on the afternoon of the next day about an hour before the coach started on its return journey. The day was beautifully fine. My rival had got into his post-chaise directly the trial was over, and was well on his road before we started. To my surprise, Tommy was again the coachman. Before we had gone five miles on the old straight Roman road, rain began and poured all the rest of the journey. Tommy was full of nods and becks and wreathed smiles; but he was close as an oyster as to what they meant. At the first stage we heard that my rival had got away about a quarter of an hour before us. Tommy beamed more than ever. At the second stage my rival had not got away when we drove up. He was not ready to go before we started. Indeed we drove off nearly together. To my surprise and delight he fell behind, and when we arrived at the river-side he was not in sight. The steamboat was panting at the jetty, and I had scarcely got on board before she was off. But Tommy had time to say to me, "I tell'd you I would mak' that all right." "What did you do?" "Do," he cried; "why, Jim that drove him is a pard of mine, and I squared him." I got to

Hull that night. My rival did not ; and we had the report.

The trial was peculiar in one respect. A gentleman farmer named Copeman had been murdered on his way home from a fair or market near Brigg. His body was found by the roadside fearfully beaten. A young farmer whose name I forget was, for some reason, suspected, and was arrested. He was a man in good position, and naturally the affair created a great deal of interest. At the trial the evidence, which was purely circumstantial, was very strong ; but the jury found the accused not guilty. He was liberated, and shortly afterwards was rearrested on a charge of having stolen a handkerchief from Mr. Copeman. There could be no doubt that this handkerchief was in the possession of the murdered man immediately before his death. It was found in the possession of the accused, and there was every reason to believe that it had been taken at the time of the murder. The accused was tried at the next assizes, found guilty, and sentenced to transportation for life. The first jury had hesitated to convict because of the death penalty for murder. The second jury decided in accordance with the evidence.

Another murder case which I had to report at its final stages was in some respects not unlike that just described. Near to Mirfield there stood a house occupied by an elderly couple—man and wife. They kept one servant—a young woman. One morning, as they made no appearance, the neighbours became alarmed, the house was entered, and it was found

that all the three occupants had been most brutally murdered. If I remember aright, they had been clubbed to death. The house had been robbed, and the conclusion of the police was that burglars, who had broken in, had been disturbed by the residents and had killed them. It was pretty plain that more than one person had been engaged in the crime. The police speedily found reason to suspect two hawkers, named Patrick Reid and Michael M'Cabe, and they were arrested. Evidence accumulated against them, and they were brought to trial at York. The charge against them was of having murdered one of the three occupants of the house—I forget which. They were acquitted and released, only to be speedily rearrested.

At the next assizes they were put upon their trial for the murder of another of the occupants of the house. It was certain that if they had killed one they had killed all three, and they had been acquitted of the murder of one. Happily this was a case in which *autrefois acquit* could not apply. On their second trial they were both convicted and sentenced to death.

Then a curious disclosure was made. Mr. Digby Seymour had defended one of the two—I forget which, and at the trial he had done his best to show that if either of the men had been concerned in the murder it must have been the other man and not his client. After the conviction Mr. Seymour made it known that before the trial he had had an interview with his client, who had confessed to him that he,

and he alone, had committed the murder, and that the other man was innocent. The object of this disclosure was to save the life of the man who had not had the benefit of Mr. Seymour's advocacy at the trial. The story was not altogether believed—that is, Mr. Seymour's client was not believed; but I think the sentence of the other man was commuted to penal servitude for life.

One other case of murder comes to my recollection. It was highly dramatic in almost every incident. In Hull there was at that time a row of respectable houses called Prospect Place. In front of each house there was a small garden plot, separated by a wooden railing from the footpath. The road was narrow, and on the other side of it was a ditch usually full of stagnant and weed-grown water. The place was a *cul-de-sac*. In one of the houses about half-way down the place a young man lived with his parents. He was cashier in the office of a firm of wealthy merchants. One morning in May, just as day broke, the policeman on the beat saw what he thought was a drunken man lying partly in the ditch of which I have spoken. He crossed the road and found that the man was dead. It was the young fellow just mentioned. Alarm was given, and on examination it became clear that murder had been done. The young fellow had been garrotted at the gate leading to his house, and his body had been dragged across the road and thrown partly into the ditch. The assumption was that some noise had alarmed the murderer or murderers, and they had not completed



their task of hiding the body. The pockets of the dead man had been rifled, his watch taken, and whatever money he might have had in his possession when he was attacked.

The same day two men, named Snape and Smith, were apprehended. I saw them when they were brought up at the Police Court. The police knew them as being of the criminal class. The evidence that justified their apprehension was to the effect that they had been trying to dispose of a watch, which, from the description given of it, was believed to be that of the murdered man. This watch was not in their possession when they were arrested. As soon as they were caught, several people living in the district where the murder was committed, identified them as having been seen together, going in the direction of Prospect Place, between ten and eleven o'clock on the previous evening. They protested their innocence, and were remanded. The police had noticed mud and weed on the boots of Snape, and the assistance of an expert brought to light the fact that the weed adhering to the boot was a species of *confervæ*, which the expert declared was to be found in the ditch in Prospect Place, and nowhere else near the town so far as he knew.

Meantime the police had made another discovery. On the footpath near the gate of the house of the murdered man, one of them picked up a tail of fur. Manifestly it had once been part of a boa ; and the indications were that it had been violently torn out of its place. The theory then set up was that the

young fellow had been spoken to by some woman who was wearing a boa, and that while she kept him in talk he was attacked from behind by a confederate of hers, and in his struggle had caught hold of her boa and torn the tail from it. This new clue led to the arrest of a woman known as Black Rose. She had lodged in the same house as Snape and Smith. In her possession was found a boa with one tail gone ; and furriers swore that the tail found at the place of the murder fitted the boa, and was exactly of the kind that would be put to it. In the end Black Rose, Snape, and Smith, with two other persons, were committed for trial charged with the murder.

In due course the trial came on. I had to go to York to report it. I stayed at the Robin Hood Hotel, where also stayed a solicitor named Archer, managing clerk for the prosecuting attorneys, and the solicitor who had the defence of Snape and Smith. His name was Greaves. Black Rose was undefended ; but I think counsel appeared for the other two prisoners. The trial lasted two days. All the evidence had been given ; counsel had made their speeches ; and the Judge had summed up. The jury were leaving the box about five in the afternoon to consider their verdict, when one of their number fell down in an epileptic fit. The court was adjourned for a short time to enable a doctor to see the suffering man. When it met again, this doctor stated that while his patient was recovering, he would not be in a condition to give attention or consideration to

the evidence he had heard for some days to come. The result was that the trial had to begin afresh next day. The evidence first taken was read over, and supplemented; and a statement which Black Rose had made in her own defence on the first trial was put in as evidence against her. In the end the jury acquitted all the prisoners.

That evening, when we were at dinner at the Robin Hood Hotel, Archer said, "Greaves, we could have told you where Smith was on the night of the murder. He was not in it." "No," replied Greaves, "I know that, and I also know that Snape was not in it." "Oh yes, he was," said Archer; "he and Black Rose and that other fellow did it." I was horrified at all this. "What!" I said to Archer; "do you mean to say you put Smith on his trial, knowing him to be innocent?" "Yes," he replied. "That seems to have been a very shocking course. You put the man's life in peril when you knew he had not committed the crime! How did you reconcile that to your conscience?" "Oh, very easily," was the reply. "You see, Snape was the guilty one. Several of our witnesses swore they had seen him and Smith together near to Prospect Place. They were mistaken; the second man was not Smith. But if we had withdrawn the charge against him, their evidence as against Snape would have been discredited; and we should not have had a chance of getting a conviction. If Smith had been convicted, we could have made it all right for him." I was not convinced of the honesty of the proceeding; but there was no

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more to be said. I may add that I believe Snape was convicted some months afterwards of being in possession of bank notes which had been taken from the murdered man at the time of his death.

## CHAPTER III

All-round reporters—Old acquaintances—Samuel Warren—His simple vanity—His politeness—His snubs to counsel—His character as a judge—Member for Midhurst—Mr. Digby Seymour—Mr. Dearsly.

IF there was less of rush in the reporting of those old days there was plenty of variety, in the widest sense of the word. Division of reporting labour had scarcely then begun, at least on the provincial papers. There was no man specially told off for agricultural subjects, or for descriptive writing, or for trade questions, or indeed for anything. The reporter must be fit for all subjects—racing, prize-fighting, fat cattle, flower shows, religious meetings, —whatever wanted attention. Of course there were many who were not fit to deal with all the matters that had to be dealt with. Some of the reporters were indeed not fit to deal with any of them. It is pretty much the same now. But the adaptable fellow got a training which in these days it would be difficult to get. Real knowledge came by experience and observation; and probably there were then as many good all-round men as are to be found at present. One subject may be mentioned—dramatic



criticism. This has become something like a specialty; and great ability is devoted to it. Yet I think if I were to search some old files I could find sound and able dramatic criticism done by reporters who had, before going to the theatre at night, been engaged among prize cattle during the day. As with dramatic criticism, so with other subjects. The old days of provincial journalism were not all ignorance and confusion. I can remember a dozen men who were trained as reporters in those days who rose to high positions subsequently. They became lawyers, or authors, or clergymen; and in these new callings their old experience stood them in good stead. As for others who remained in journalism—where are they now? When I think of them, I am somehow reminded of Mrs. Hemans's "Graves of a Household." One was successful in India; and died there. One founded a newspaper in New Zealand; and is a wealthy and prosperous man. Some went to London and succeeded. Some went there, and like other clever fellows succumbed to its manifold temptations. Their places know them no more.

More pleasant than such memories as these are others of acquaintances and experiences in the far-back days. It was my good fortune to make the acquaintance of Samuel Warren. He had made a literary reputation of its kind by his *Diary of a Late Physician*, and by that wonderful novel *Ten Thousand a Year*. He became Recorder of Hull, and there I met him. Of course I had read his

books, and at that time a real live author was a man to know. In these days they are as plentiful as blackberries, or Colonels in the United States. Some of them I know, others I have known. Perhaps it may be said without offence that confidence in their own merits is more or less the badge of all their tribe. But I have never met one whose simple vanity was as marked as that of Samuel Warren. He was always posing; always feeling for applause. Yet you could not be angry with him or despise him. He was sincerely and honestly vain. It was the vanity of the child dressed in new clothes. What is more, he knew he was vain, and he struggled against it without success.

One evening I dined with him at the Vittoria Hotel in Hull, where he stayed when he was down to fulfil his duties as Recorder. He was a delightful talker, with many I's in his conversation. After dinner we drew to the fire, and then he began to talk in earnest. His subject was himself and his vanity. For an hour he enlarged on this theme. He had plenty of material. He lamented his weakness. He told how he made the best resolutions to get rid of it, and how he fell back at once. "I cannot help it," he said. "It is weak and foolish. I should have more respect if I were less vain. But the opportunity of attracting attention is, I regret to say, too much for me. I am laying my weakness bare to you to-night. You can see what I am and what I would wish to be. You will say that a man who can confess as I am



confessing is not likely to sin again. I shall be guilty to-morrow if the opportunity arises." An opportunity did arise, and there was another display of genial vanity. Those who indulge in psychical studies may know Warren's case to be common. I have never seen one so marked.

A more punctiliously polite man than Warren never existed. He used to be as polite with criminals as with friends. On one occasion a prisoner had been found guilty of pocket-picking. He was an old offender. Warren had begun to sentence him with the words, "Prisoner at the bar," when he was interrupted by the Clerk of the Peace, who reminded him that some formality had been omitted. "I beg your pardon, prisoner," he cried, "I really must beg your pardon. I was about to be guilty of an irregularity." Then the formality was gone through, and, after a ten minutes' lecture to the prisoner, that worthy was sentenced to as heavy a punishment as could be awarded in his case.

Once the punctilious politeness of Warren failed him. As Recorder he was judge of a court of venire, at which civil cases were tried. Such a case was going on. It was an action between two parishes as to the chargeability of a pauper. Fights on questions of this kind were common in those days. On one side were Mr. Archbold, a veteran lawyer, whose books may now be obsolete though they were authoritative then, and Mr. Perronet Thompson, son of Colonel Perronet Thompson of Free Trade renown. On the other side were Mr. Digby

Seymour and Mr. Littler. As the case went on it was plain that Mr. Archbold and Mr. Thompson were making the best of it. At last Warren, leaning over his desk, and beaming on the bar, said :

"Mr. Seymour, do you know what you and Mr. Littler in the hands of Mr. Archbold and Mr. Thompson remind me of?"

"No, sir," replied Mr. Seymour.

"Of two geese on a common."

There was laughter in the court, and Mr. Seymour and Mr. Littler made the best of it. Warren evidently thought he had said a good thing, and for a minute looked happy. Then the rudeness of what he had said occurred to him, and he became sad and apologetic.

"I sincerely beg your pardon," he cried, "I ought not to have said such a thing. Pray forgive me."

Mr. Seymour was equal to the occasion. "There is nothing to forgive," he said. "My learned friend and myself would never think of resenting such a remark, *coming from you*, sir."

The emphasis on the last words was not noticed by Warren. He became happy at once.

Warren was a good judge. He was careful in the management of every case, and firm in keeping a hand on the frequent divagations of counsel. He seemed always in the course of a case to be leaning towards the prisoner. He took care that nothing was, as he thought, unfairly pressed by the prosecutor, while at the same time he encouraged everything

that might tell in the accused's favour. He summed up judicially and impartially. Making allowance for little displays of vanity, he put the case to the jury with admirable clearness. It was for them to return the verdict. If that happened to be "guilty," his duty began again. To me he always seemed rather severe in his sentences; but I do not remember a case where it could be said with justice that a prisoner got more punishment than he deserved.

In 1856 Warren was elected member for Midhurst. He was proud of this, and let it be known that he meant to shine as a statesman. His career in Parliament was short. In 1859 he was offered the Chairmanship of the Lunacy Commission. The offer threw him into a state of the greatest perplexity. Acceptance of it meant the resignation of his seat in the House of Commons, and the abandonment of all his hopes of greatness as a statesman. But he was poor, and the salary of the offered post was considerable. It meant in effect a sufficient provision for him for the rest of his life. While he was in this state of doubt—between ambition on the one hand, and the acceptance of a competency on the other—he wrote to me. In the simplest form he told me all his difficulties. In pages of writing he discussed his hopes and fears, and asked for suggestions as to the course he should take. I have no doubt that he wrote many such letters. My answer was in effect, "Take the place," and I should be much surprised to hear that any of his other correspondents had written in a different sense. Anyway he did take the place.

There are men still living about the House of Commons who remember Warren's retirement. One Wednesday afternoon he succeeded in finding an opportunity, and in a characteristic speech announced his resignation and bade the House farewell. I am afraid he was laughed at; but there must have been some present who recognised in what he said and did a kindly, generous spirit. All his vanity could not hide the fact that he was in the best sense an honest gentleman.

About his time there were several men who practised at the bar before him who had a high reputation, or who have made one since. I have mentioned the names of Mr. Archbold and Mr. Perronet Thompson. They were lawyers of a dry school. Mr. Digby Seymour, whose name I have also mentioned, was not dry. He was eloquent, and attracted audiences even then. He became Recorder of Newcastle. He was great at election speech-making. Twice I had experience of him in such work. The first time had a certain peculiarity. Members had to be elected for Hull, and one of the candidates on the Liberal side was a Mr. William Digby Seymour. He was no relative of William Digby Seymour, the lawyer. He was a merchant in London. He had plenty of money and no oratory. I do not think I do injustice to the other William Digby Seymour when I say he had plenty of oratory and no money. It was another illustration in its way of the celebrated aphorism of the "unfortunate nobleman" who was sent to prison for not being



Sir Roger Tichborne—"Some people has money and no brains. Some people has brains and no money. Why should not the people as has brains and no money get money from them as has money and no brains?" Of course I do not mean that Mr. William Digby Seymour, the lawyer, had money-getting in his mind; but he found oratory for the William Digby Seymour who had none, but whose means were abundant. The lawyer made speeches for the merchant. The names were the same, and people at a distance who knew the merchant and did not know the lawyer must have wondered at the eloquence which the former seemed to have developed. Mr. Seymour was elected, and I have never had any doubt that he owed his election in the main to the oratory of his namesake, the lawyer.

That Mr. William Digby Seymour, the lawyer, believed he had won the election there can be little doubt. For, on a later occasion when a vacancy in the representation of Hull occurred, he offered himself as a candidate. He was not elected. His eloquence was unabated. Yet somehow it failed to win the electors. They had an overdose of oratory and voted for another man. If I remember rightly, Mr. Seymour did not often attend the quarter-sessions after his rejection as a Parliamentary candidate.

One other member of the bar of those days stands out in my recollection. Mr. Dearsly was a young man with great gifts. What he was as a lawyer, I

cannot say. As an advocate for jury practice he had few equals in those days. He was eagerly sought for to defend accused persons, and he won acquittal in many cases by sheer force of ingenuity and eloquence. It may be feared that many scoundrels owed to him escape from punishment which they richly deserved. It was, or seemed to be, all but impossible for juries to withstand his pathetic appeals. Again and again I have heard the Recorder try by the use of cold reason to weaken the impression Mr. Dearsly had made; and the effort was rarely successful. Even then his success used to make me doubt the wisdom of juries. They would give to sentiment what they would not yield to evidence. Dearsly was a Roman Catholic. He was also an extremely gay man—I do not like to use the word dissipated. Perhaps if he had been less mercurial and more steady he would have been less eloquent and less effective as a jury advocate. He could not resist temptation. He made the best resolutions, and kept them till the chance of breaking them came. He knew his weakness, and deplored it. Once, when I had been saying something to him on the subject, he said, "I know all you say is true. It is hell or a cell with me." I never heard that he became a monk.

## CHAPTER IV

Old electioneering—Hustings experiences—A bespattered candidate  
—Corrupt practices—Flags and voters—A County election—  
Lord Hotham—Lord Ripon's first election—James Clay—  
Beverley and bribery—Alfred Crosskill.

IN the last chapter I have spoken of some electioneering. There was fun and sometimes anything but fun in reporting elections in those days. The ballot was unknown. Nominations were not made in the returning officer's rooms, but before the electors, and many who were not electors. The candidates presented themselves on hustings erected for the purpose. They were duly proposed and seconded by friends, and then they made speeches to show that they really were fit and proper persons to represent the constituency. In all this there was fine opportunity for the display of election wit by the crowd before the hustings. Sometimes—indeed often—that wit took the form of paving-stones, or rotten eggs, or rotten herrings. When feeling ran high, it was best to have one of the supports of the roof of the hustings in front of you. No special provision was made for reporters. They were admitted to the hustings, and allowed to get to the front—if they could. Their object was to get



near to the candidate their newspaper favoured, so that at least his eloquence should not be wasted. I have stood at the elbow of many candidates and taken notes of their sayings with my note-book in my left hand. It was not always safe. Missiles were aimed at the candidate; and if the aim was bad or indifferent, the reporter was certain to share freely in the gifts intended for the more important person. I remember one occasion when unsavoury eggs were the most numerous of these gifts. The candidate was a courageous gentleman. I stood at his elbow. The first egg struck me on the shoulder and bespattered my note-book. Others, better aimed, took him in the chest, the arms, the head, until he had something like the appearance of a custard. I was nearly as well painted. I could not leave him while he tried to speak. He would not move. At last his courage prevailed. The storm of missiles ceased. He said what he had to say; and he wound up thus :

“Gentlemen who do not intend to vote for me, for these and other mercies” (pointing to his bespatterings) “I thank you. It is to me most gratifying that you are not more in number. If you had been, you would have finished me as a man. As it is, you have given me strength as a candidate. You have proved that my foes are not so numerous as my friends. To-morrow I shall win at the poll.”

And he did.

The public nomination was necessary as well for an uncontested as for a contested election. When

there was no contest, the crowd was, as a rule, noisier than in the case of a contest. The nomination was the opportunity for those who would have liked a fight, and who were baulked of one, to show their displeasure. They did so freely. I should be sorry to say that political principle had anything to do with their anger. A contested election meant the spending of much money—a non-contested election meant the spending of very little. No Corrupt Practices Act, like to that under which free and independent electors now suffer, was then in existence. Flags must be numerous, and they must be of silk. The wives of the free and independent voters saw to this, and also saw that the flags were not too much exposed if the weather was bad. Blue and orange silk dresses were numerous after an election, *vice* blue and orange flags deposed. I have known free and independent electors who gave their votes to the blues because blue was regarded by Mrs. Voter as best suited to her taste and complexion. Nobody troubled about a public-house or two being opened. Beer was a sedative to be taken by refractory voters. A man might never ride in a cab between any two elections; but on the polling day he could not, and would not, move without one. I daresay the result, so far as it could be measured by legislation, was not worse than it is under our present perfect and altogether pure system.

At the general election of 1847 the Conservative candidates for the East Riding of Yorkshire were returned without opposition. They were Lord

Hotham and Mr. Henry Broadley. How well I remember Lord Hotham. He was even then of the old school—a gentleman every inch of him. He had retired from the navy, but had kept his sailor's frankness and bluntness. His invariable wear in the House of Commons and at public meetings was a blue dress-coat with brass or gilt buttons. His oratory was moulded in the fine old stately style. He never gabbled over a speech. He never talked one out in a conversational way. He put in all the inflections and minded his points. Thus his sentences were well marked. As you listened to him you almost expected to hear at every turn a quotation in sonorous Greek or in musical Latin. He spoke sensibly; and I don't know that in the course of its history the House of Commons has had in its rank and file many worthier or more honest men than Lord Hotham.

At the time of the election, when he and Mr. Broadley were returned without opposition, Beverley was the county town for the East Riding. It is as pleasant a place as can be found. Close to it is a great breezy moor—the Westwood. It has a minster which shines as an ecclesiastical edifice among the cathedrals of England. It has one of the finest parish churches in the country. It has, or had, two market-places—the Wednesday and the Saturday market. In the larger of these places—I forget whether it belongs to Wednesday or Saturday—the hustings were erected. It is a great square with standing-room for many thousands of people.

When Lord Hotham and Mr. Broadley came to the hustings, they were escorted by some hundreds of farmers and country gentlemen, all mounted. Before the proceedings began on the hustings these horsemen formed a great crescent line. Each wing started from the side of the hustings and extended, so to speak, round the square. Thus they enclosed the crowd on foot. Whether there had been some expectation of riot, or whether the arrangement was purely for display, I do not know. At any rate, there was no riot. The two candidates were converted into members and were duly girt with the sword of a knight of the shire. This being accomplished, the horsemen got their mounts into stables as soon as they could, and hasted to the Assembly Rooms, where a good dinner and a pint of wine each awaited them—provided at the expense of the new members. Speeches were made. Nobody thought of corruption. The election was as valid as the marriage of a couple by the Archbishop of Canterbury. What bad old times those were!

It cannot be doubted that the borough voters of those days—or at least the majority of them—regarded their votes as instruments which ought to produce them something at election times. They were to a great extent “freemen.” Many of them had paid for their franchise, and they thought it ought to produce them some return. Thus they would not vote unless they were paid; but it did not follow that payment by anybody would secure their votes. I remember hearing the case for them



put by Mr. James Clay, who sat for Hull for many years. Whist players recognise him as an authority in respect to their favourite game. It had been proved that many freemen had been paid for their votes given to him. He explained their case: "These good men," he said in effect, "have been accustomed to payment for voting. They are not unprincipled. There are not many of them who would take payment to vote for the man whose principles were not theirs. But they expect to be paid for voting for the man with whom they agree. This may be bribery in a technical sense; but it is not bribery in any corrupt sense." Mr. Clay's argument was in accordance with the facts. But those facts do not square with the electoral morality which happily now prevails.

The occasion on which Mr. Clay justified or extenuated the payment of voters was one of interest. It was in 1852. At the general election of that year he and Viscount Goderich were the Liberal candidates for Hull. Viscount Goderich is the present Marquis of Ripon. That was his first effort to enter Parliament. He and Mr. Clay made a sort of formal entry to begin the campaign. They went to the Cross Keys Hotel, the bow-windows of which hostelry look out on the market-place. A great crowd had gathered, and speeches were expected. The windows were thrown open, and the candidates presented themselves. Lord Goderich was put forward first. He was puny in figure and squeaky in voice. He was cheered to

the echo when he appeared. But not a word that he said could be heard by the crowd. Vainly he strained his throat in reply to shouts of "Spe-ak oop, man." It was of no use. The crowd was getting out of heart, and the backers of the candidates were looking dismal. Mr. Clay was equal to the occasion. With some brusqueness he elbowed Lord Goderich aside and presented himself. The crowd knew him. He was an old favourite, and a roar of welcome went up from the assemblage. When it lulled he began, "Now my old friends and constituents, let me see if I can make myself heard." "Well done, Jimmy," was the answering cry. He did make himself heard. He always spoke slowly and distinctly—so slowly that he could almost have been reported in long-hand. He had a good clear voice, which on this occasion he used to the best advantage. There was, in what he said, and in his manner, a suspicion of contempt for his puny colleague. The crowd did not object to this, and in the end were in the best of good-humour.

This was the beginning of an election that ended in the return of Mr. Clay and Viscount Goderich. They did not enjoy the victory. A petition was presented against their return, and they were unseated. The evidence showed that there had been wide-spread bribery, and a commission of inquiry was issued. The head of that commission was a Mr. Solly Flood, who was, I think, an Irishman. The commission sat for weeks, and brought to light the fact that several thousands of



voters had been bribed by payments averaging thirty shillings each. They had been nominally engaged as messengers, and never delivered any message or went anywhere except to draw their pay. The business had been managed by an expert old electioneerer familiarly known as Sammy Wilde. He was a little stout man, whose business was that of a slater. He had been electioneering from his youth upward, and was trusted for his honesty by all the candidates he favoured. In his time he must have had many pretty experiences in the way of bribery ; but he had never done it on so large a scale before. The borough narrowly escaped disfranchisement. I suppose its size, and the fact that there were a few virtuous men in it, saved the constituency. It was before this commission that Mr. Clay delivered the defence of voters who took pay, of which I have already spoken. The commissioners differed as to the wording of their report, and Mr. Solly Flood drew up one of his own. Of it all that I can remember is that it was very long.

At that time Beverley returned two members. Its Sammy Wilde was a man named Daniel Boyes, a publican. He was a great favourite with the free and independent electors. He always took care that there was a contest, and that they were paid. At one election two candidates were under his wing. They were Liberals. One of them was Mr. or Baron Goldsmid, a rich Hebrew. Jewish disabilities had not then been removed ; and Boyes pointed

out to the electors the everlasting glory that would be theirs if they did their part in the battle of civil and religious freedom by returning Mr. Goldsmid. That would be a great and crowning victory for them as Liberals. Strangely, Boyes's ardour for Mr. Goldsmid suddenly cooled. It became known that there was a rupture between them. The rumour spread that Mr. Goldsmid had refused to put his cheque-book at the disposal of Daniel. Such a thing had never been heard of before. It was an unpardonable sin; and it was not pardoned, Mr. Goldsmid was rejected. The other Liberal was returned along with a genuine old Tory, Mr. Sackville Lane Fox. The free and independent electors had resented the indignity put upon them by Mr. Goldsmid, and had voted for Mr. Fox without payment. That at least was said at the time. I am not sure that they had shown so much self-denial.

In the course of elections in Beverley I became acquainted for the time with several men of more or less note. One was the Hon. Francis Lawley. Another was the Hon. Arthur Gordon, uncle of the present Earl of Aberdeen. He charmed everybody. Yet his connection with Beverley was not a long one. Money was the first necessity there. It is on record that the electors did one remarkable and disinterested action. At a certain election a Mr. Glover became a candidate. He was what would now, I suppose, be called a Tory democrat. He had no money, and he was rejected. At the next election he presented himself again, and was returned

by a good majority. His oratory had triumphed. His avowals of poverty had gone to the heart of the electors. He did not sit long. A petition was presented against him on the ground that he had not the necessary property qualification. It was true he had not, and he was unseated. If I am not mistaken it was his case that led to the abolition of the property qualification. A Bill was introduced for its abolition, and that Bill became an Act. After all, the disinterested action of the Beverley voters had its reward.

Meantime the influence of Daniel Boyes, though backed by that of William Crosskill, a famous agricultural implement maker, had been waning. The Conservatives were increasing in strength. They borrowed Daniel's methods, and poached on his venal manors. Finally, under the auspices of Sir Henry Edwards, the borough was disfranchised. In 1868 the general election took place close on the heels of the municipal elections. Conservative candidates were put forward in every ward. Almost every elector was paid—certainly every elector who would take money was paid. The Conservative candidates were returned. The Parliamentary election resulted in the return of Sir Henry Edwards and his Conservative colleague. The virtuous Boyes and his friends were righteously indignant at the wholesale corruption of voters. A petition against the return of the Conservative members was presented. Then it came out that no money had been paid for votes at the Parliamentary election. The bribery had

been done at the municipal elections, and the gratitude of the honest but well-paid voters had been strong enough to induce them to vote at the Parliamentary election for those who had found the money they had received a month or two before. This virtue was not rewarded. The members were unseated. Wholesale corruption was reported; and in the end the borough was disfranchised.

Just now I mentioned the name of William Crosskill. He was one of the most interesting men I have met. He was not blessed with much more knowledge of letters than bare acquaintance with the three R's could give him. But he was most ingenious and enterprising. He invented several well-known and useful agricultural implements. He produced a portable railway. From the humblest of beginnings he had become a large employer of labour. His works were extensive. His pride in them was great. It was legitimate pride. He was an excellent talker, and an indefatigable worker. He did as much as most men in his day for high farming. Unfortunately his works had grown more rapidly than his capital; and there came a foreclosure. His political friends took up his case, and got for him the appointment of stamp distributor in Hull. It was a fairly paid office, and in it he rested till his death.



## CHAPTER V

Thackeray—An interview and a criticism—Gough—Local magnates  
—“Salt Tom”—A rule of life—The people of Hull—A  
compliment.

THOUGH in my early experience I met many men of distinction in their time, my memory of them is comparatively slight. One of them was Thackeray, and of my one interview with him I have a clear recollection. It was when he was delivering his lectures on “The Four Georges.” As a reporter I went to the first of these lectures in Hull, and wrote a fairly long account of it. On the morning when the report appeared, a note from Thackeray was put into my hands at the office. In it he simply asked that the gentleman who had reported his lecture would call upon him. I was mightily proud of the invitation. I pictured to myself the interview, and thought of praises which would be given to me. I knew the report was accurate, as far as it went, and it did not enter into my mind that fault could be found with me. I went and was brought to Thackeray. He rose from his chair, and standing with his back to the fire beckoned me to a seat. Then the conversation began.

"Are you the young man who reported my lecture?" he asked.

"I am."

"Do you know, sir, that you have done your best to deprive me of my living?"

"No," said I, in sheer astonishment.

"You have," he said. "I make my living by delivering those lectures. If they are reported, no one will come to hear them, and I shall not be wanted."

"That view of the matter never occurred to me," I said somewhat nervously. "I had no other object than to let the general public who could not hear the lectures know what they were like."

"No doubt," he said; "but there are people who will be satisfied with your reports, and I shall be deprived of my just gains as a worker."

"Was the report good as far as it went?"

"Confound it, sir, that is what I complain of. If the report had not been good, I should not have cared. The public would have seen that it was rubbish that I could not have written."

"In that case," said I, "as I have not wronged you by incapacity or stupidity, you have nothing to complain of save my ignorance of your position. That ignorance is now removed, and of course, so far as I am concerned, I shall respect your wishes."

"Thank you. Is there any one else to be consulted?"

"Of course," I replied, "the editor may have views of his own, and I must do his bidding. But



I have no doubt that when I tell him what you have said, he will not require the lectures to be further reported."

"Then you will tell him?"

"Yes; as soon as I see him."

"Thank you. Then that matter is at an end."

I was rising to go, when he said, "And now, young sir, what do you think of the lecture?"

"I thought it very clever," I replied; "but I thought you had used a great deal of cleverness in trying to hide a kindly heart under cover of cheap cynicism."

"Confound it," he said, "you are frank enough. What do you mean by cheap cynicism?"

"Well, I am scarcely prepared to answer that question off-hand."

"I think you should try to tell me what you mean. It sounds like harsh criticism!"

"Please remember, it is the criticism of a very young man. Perhaps it is impertinent."

"I am sure you did not mean to be impertinent, and I should like to know what was in your mind."

"I thought the lecture was cynical. You will, I think, admit that it is."

He nodded: and I went on.

"It struck me that the cynicism was what any clever man who chose to give his mind to it could produce, and therefore I spoke of it as 'cheap cynicism.'"

"Thank you," he said, with a smile. "Perhaps you are right. But no one has ever said such a

thing to me before. Don't imagine I am offended. *Ex oribus parvulorum* : you know the rest."

I did, and I felt a little mortified. But the kindness of the tone soon removed all that feeling. I was a babe, to him ; and I had been a venturesome babe.

That was my interview with Thackeray. So far as I remember, I never saw him in private again ; and doubtless he soon forgot all that had passed. It had one good effect, so far as I was concerned. It made me much more modest in future in expressing opinions as to any man's literary work.

Dickens and Fanny Kemble I met, but, strangely enough, neither of them made any remarkable impression upon me. Doubtless that was my fault. Anyway it is a fact.

Among lecturers whose sayings I reported in those days was Gough, the American advocate of teetotalism. He was, in many respects, the most eloquent man I ever heard speak in public. No doubt there was a kind of trickery in his oratory ; but you lost sight of that in the air and manner of intense earnestness with which his words were delivered. I can recall even now some of the striking phrases with which he drove home his arguments. They might have been appropriated by him from others. I believe they were. But they had the force of novelty and fine delivery ; and it is unquestionable that they often made a great impression upon those who heard them.

Wholly different from lecturers or literary men were some of the local magnates of the period.

Yet in their way they were interesting as studies of human nature. One I particularly remember was known in Hull as "Salt Tom." His name was Thomas Thompson. He was a merchant. He had been Mayor of the town, and Alderman. It was said he had made a large fortune out of salt—hence his familiar cognomen. About the fortune there was no doubt. In those days there were no stipendiary magistrates. The justices each had their day in the police court. No sailor who had a dispute with a captain or a shipowner ever chose "Salt Tom's" day for the hearing of his case. He was not consciously unjust or unfair; but, as a shipowner, he always saw the shipowner's case more clearly than the case of the sailor.

At the time of which I am thinking, Mr. Thompson had retired from business, or at least had left the control of it in the hands of his sons. For many years of his life he had occupied a fair-sized house looking over the Humber Dock. When he retired he took a country house, and his old place became the counting-house and offices for the business. But he reserved one room in it for himself; and in that room he smoked and drank his grog. He delighted to have his cronies there; and many a sitting I have had with him, and listened to his glorification of the good old times, and his lamentations over their passing away. In that room he more than once told me the story of his life. He was born at Alnwick of very poor parents. Early in the century he had found his way to Hull

with not even the proverbial half-crown in his pocket. He tried to earn a living and was not very successful. In his search for employment he haunted the dock quays, and soon he saw what he thought was a chance for him, if he could get a few pence before the world. He noticed that on a ship from the East Indies there were bags for which nobody seemed to care, and he thought he could make a profit by buying some of these and selling them. At last he scraped together fourpence, and with this in his pocket went to the captain of the ship and bargained for some bags. He got two or three for his fourpence, took them off, found a market for them, and had as a result eightpence in his pocket. He went straight back to the captain, bought some more bags, and sold them at a profit. He did this three or four times. The captain, struck with his return so often, asked him what he wanted with the bags. Thompson told him of the business he was doing, and the captain, surprised, said, "You'll do, my lad; you'll get on. You shall have some more, and you can pay me when you have sold them. But let me give you a bit of advice that will be useful to you. In all you do, learn to distinguish between a sharp trick and a dishonest action."

"And that," said the old man with pride, "has been my rule through life."

Casuists must decide what merit was due to him for discovering the dividing line. I am sure he never meant to be dishonest.



Thompson had a great contempt for the people of Hull in the generic sense. Very few of them had been so successful as he had been ; and I believe it does sometimes happen that successful men are given to admiring their own surpassing ability, and looking with contemptuous pity upon those who have not amassed wealth. Thompson was no worse in this respect than many other men.

One day he said a very contemptuous thing of the people of Hull. I only record it and make no comment.

"You don't seem to think very highly of Hull people," I said, after he had been criticising them for some time.

"The people o' Hull," sneered he—"the people o' Hull ha' got the mud o' th' Humber i' their brains."

He may have been right. I felt thankful that he even allowed that they had brains.

Thompson had a great crony named Brownlow, a large shipowner. Brownlow was the most unpunctual of men. He always came late to an appointment. On one occasion when he was late as usual Thompson was indignant. "Late again, Brownlow," he said. "You're always late. I suppose you can't help it. I believe you must have been born half an hour late."

Brownlow was not offended. He laughed and accepted the excuse made for him.

What a number of other figures of that time flit across my mind. There was Bright, the corn



merchant, who was a pillar of the Church. He preached good things. He presided at religious meetings and exhorted young men to be pious, honest, and church-going. He was the President of a Society at which young men read papers—for the most part on subjects they did not understand—and discussed them. I was asked to read a paper, and did so. The subject was "The Press and the Pulpit." Of course I exalted the Press. The discussion of that paper was promptly adjourned at the instance of the Chairman; and before the next meeting I was informed that I "need not attend, for that no discussion of my subject would be allowed." In the end Mr. Bright was convicted of forgery, and I believe died in penal servitude.

Then there was Alderman Bannister. He was a handsome overbearing man. Everybody liked him on one side, so to speak, and disliked him on another. He was always blundering in his speech. On one occasion, shortly after the first attempt to raise a volunteer force, he was called upon as a volunteer officer to respond at a municipal dinner to the toast of "The Volunteers." He spoke for some time in a bombastic vein, and he perorated thus: "Gentlemen, on behalf of my comrades, I can assure you that if Napoleon's colonels should land at Spurn, the First East York Rifles will not be the last to flee." He could not comprehend the laughter that followed.

On another occasion he was presiding as a justice in the police court. I was there as a reporter.

Some person came forward with an irrelevant complaint.

"Be off with you," said Bannister, "you've no *locum standum* here."

"*Locus standi*, sir," said the clerk, correcting him.

"All right. *Locus standi*, then. I don't know anything about your French." To the person addressed—"You know what I mean."

I suppose the applicant did. Anyway he departed, and Bannister went on with the dispensation of justice according to his lights.

Compliments have not often come my way. I am not complaining. Probably I have had as many as I have deserved. But once I was complimented. I had stepped out of my range as a pressman and had undertaken to deliver a lecture to the members of the Mechanics' Institute. The subject I chose was "Castles in the Air." The members did not seem to be deeply anxious to hear me. When the lecture began there were eight people in the body of the hall, and three on the platform, one of whom was the chairman. Him I had safe. Before the lecture was ended, the other two men had sidled out. Four of the audience had gone. At the close, one of the remaining four came forward and shook hands with me. He was a German, I think, a teacher of languages. "Thank you," he said; "oh, thank you! You have expressed what I feel." Of course this praise soothed me. The week afterwards I heard that my appreciative German had made a surreptitious departure from the town to escape the pressure of a host of creditors.

## CHAPTER VI

Dramatic criticism—Some autobiographical details—John Langford Pritchard—Behind the scenes—Madame Celeste—Bruce Norton—*The Manager in Distress*—Musical criticism of old—Louisa Pyne—The Pyne and Harrison Company.

AMONG the wonderful journalistic things in the far-off times was the dramatic and musical criticism of the provincial newspapers. I took a good deal of interest in those days in both the drama and music, and I think the assertion may be permitted to me that I tried to know something about them, and to write intelligently on them. It does not in the least follow that the effort was successful. Probably it was not. But the fact that then impressed itself on my mind, and that has never been removed, is that with a few exceptions criticism was treated as if it were the province of anybody who could report a speech or write a decent paragraph. Indeed I am not sure that the latter qualification was deemed to be absolutely necessary. Many criticisms I have seen in which the most conspicuous features were ignorance of the subject criticised, and generous disregard of English grammar. This was not altogether a monopoly of the provincial newspapers. On the

metropolitan press there were some critics of ability, and many who were no better than their country fellows. Two things could not be dispensed with—one of them must be present in every notice of a performance. There must be either lavish praise or violent condemnation. Your puff absolute covered a multitude of sins. Your denunciation absolute might create the impression that you knew something of what you were writing about. The first pleased the manager and the praised actor and singer. The latter went a long way with the public. Of course there were men who were sound and good critics ; but they were not many.

It chanced to me that I had some opportunities of knowing a little about things dramatic. To tell how the chance came makes a sentence or two of autobiography necessary. When I left school—earlier than I should have left it if my father had not died—I went into the business department of a newspaper office. I knew a little Latin and less Greek. Some German I had also. Of British poetry I had much. Milton was my favourite. I believe that at that time I could have repeated most of the “Paradise Lost” from memory. Scott I had revelled in. Byron fascinated me. Shakespeare I revered without being sure that I always understood him. Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall* I had read with profound interest. Macaulay’s *Essays* were unending delights to me ; and when his *History of England* appeared, I greedily devoured it. Of history generally I had read a good deal without in the least neglecting fiction.



Thus when I entered the newspaper office I was much more likely to be attracted by the literary side of journalism than by its business side. Before I had been in the place a fortnight, I came to the conclusion that if I was ever to make way in newspaper work I must try another avenue than the business office. The result was that I asked to be taken as an apprentice in the printing office. My request was complied with ; and thus I began by learning how newspapers are printed. At the same time I devoted a good deal of my time to shorthand, that I might take up reporting ; the whole idea being one derived from my familiarity with ships and sailors : if I was to get aloft I would do it by the futtock shrouds and not by the lubber-hole.

There was what is known as a "jobbing office" in connection with the newspaper office where I was : that is to say, besides the newspaper, handbills, placards, pamphlets, and the like were printed. One of the "jobs" was the printing of theatre bills. At that time there was no such thing known in the provinces as a "run" of a piece. Stock companies provided the nightly entertainment. It was no uncommon thing to have three or four pieces played on the same night. Many a time have I walked home at one o'clock in the morning, as soon as the night's performances at the theatre were over. I have known a company have to rehearse and play in twelve and fifteen different pieces in the course of a week.

How well I remember the whole course of things at that time. The night was usually begun with a



farce. Then before the next piece began, a gentleman would sing "The Thorn" or some other sentimental song. He usually wore white trousers and a dress-coat. He carried a piece of music, which he held in both hands down to his knees and only raised it between the verses as if to refresh his memory. Or we had two young girls to sing a duet, or to dance for ten minutes. Then came the melodrama. Then more singing; and then perhaps another melodrama or another farce. It was not unusual to have two such pieces as "The Wreck Ashore" and "Susan Hopley," or "The Miller and His Men" and "Marie the Maid of the Inn," on one night. I am afraid that quantity rather than quality was most regarded by the comparatively few theatre-goers of that day. I do not mean that there was not good acting. On the contrary, I believe the sort of training afforded by the work of a stock company in those days laid the foundation of the success of our greatest actors. Even now I should like to know what Sir Henry Irving and Mr. Toole think on this point.

Sometimes the ordinary course of performances was broken by the advent of a "star." Then the stock company had to play up to that "star," and prove their mettle. I can remember a perfect galaxy of these stars. Macready, the younger Kean, Phelps, Vandenhoff, Creswick, Charles Mathews, Helen Faucit, Ellen Tree, the sisters Cushman, Madame Vestris, Madame Celeste, and I know not how many more. There used to be rejoicing over the coming of the Leclercq family, because of their exquisite

dancing, and over the Viennese dancers—young people who grouped themselves most charmingly. There were, too, operatic stars; but for them the stock company had to stand aside.

In all this I am wandering away from the story I had to tell. Let me go back to it. As the theatre bills were printed in the office where I was, it became part of my duty to take a proof of the next day's bill to be revised by the manager. He was at the theatre: consequently I went there, and had access behind the scenes. The manager was John Langford Pritchard, an actor of much merit and of fairly high repute. He was the lessee of the York theatrical circuit, which comprised the theatres at York, Leeds, and Hull. It was at Hull I met him. I suppose he must have taken a liking for me. At any rate he made me free of the theatre, and had me to dine with him once or twice a week. How well I remember those dinners. They were almost invariably the same—a steak and, for him, a pint of port. Of course when they began I was drifting out of the printing office a little, and doing work as a reporter. Anyway, I was behind the scenes most nights, and saw all the great actors of the time. If I did not observe them to profit, it was my own fault. I know I used to compare their acting; to seek for opinions to strengthen or correct my impressions; to read the plays and note the points. These things I did that I might be able in the future to criticise intelligently. If I did not succeed it was not for want of effort.

One evening I was behind the scenes when

Madame Celeste was playing Miami in "The Green Bushes." She has to shoot somebody at one point of the piece. I was standing in the wing, and had been speaking to one of the company. I looked towards the actress just as she was levelling her rifle. To my horror I saw that it was pointed straight for me—I seemed to see down the barrel. Without a moment's hesitation I ducked my head, as she pulled the trigger. It was too much for her—she laughed consumedly, greatly to the astonishment of her audience; and when she came off she gave me a good-humoured scolding.

Mr. Pritchard had enlisted a new member of his stock company, a gentleman named Bruce Norton. There may be old theatre-goers who remember him as a respectable actor on the heavy side. He had been billed as a great tragedian, and he made his *début* at the Theatre-Royal as Virginius, in the play of that name. I watched his performance from behind the scenes for some time, and I am afraid I did not think him brilliant. Anyway, my interest in him had waned, and I was laughing with and talking to one of the young girls of the company in the third or fourth wing from the front. It will be known to those who have seen Virginius that he kills his daughter rather than give her to the tyrant Claudius. Much is made of the killing. The father is torn with anguish: the daughter clings to him and sheds many tears. Mr. Bruce Norton, following, I suppose, a well-worn tradition, had lugged his daughter to the back of the stage, apostrophising himself and her, and

the gods, in tragic tones. The laughter of myself and my companion disturbed him, and no wonder. Gradually he worked up to the wing where we stood, and with his daughter fainting in his arms, and his head bowed over her in momentary silent agony, he hissed out, "D— you, you young beggars, get out of that and be quiet." We got out of that, but I am afraid my laughter was heard in the front. The incongruity between the tragic sorrow of Virginius and what Sir William Harcourt would probably characterise as the "cursorary" anger of Mr. Bruce Norton was too much for me.

There must be some theatre-goers now who have seen a little interlude called *The Manager in Distress*. For the benefit of those who have not, I may briefly outline it. The manager comes before the curtain and announces that there is a strike in his company. They one and all, he says, refuse to go on with the performance promised for the evening. In these circumstances he can do no more than return the money of those who have paid for admission ; unless some of the ladies and gentlemen present will volunteer to do something in the way of acting to amuse the audience. All this is said with much solemnity. Then one of the members of the company who has been planted in some part of the house, rises, and speaking as one of the audience, after abusing the manager, offers to try to act a part, and so prevent everybody from being disappointed. Then another member of the company rises in another part of the house and makes a similar offer ; and so it goes on,



till the manager declares he is ready to accept the volunteers and try to go on with the night's programme. Of course there is a good deal of "gagging," and with clever actors the piece can be made infinitely amusing.

One night it was put out at the Theatre-Royal, and it began and ran its course. I remember all the actors well. One of them was the low comedian familiarly known as "Little Gomersal." He was a son of that Gomersal who, at Astley's and elsewhere, had made a name by his impersonation of Napoleon Bonaparte. On the night of which I am speaking, "Little Gomersal" spoke from the gallery. In recounting his qualifications for amateur acting, he said he could sing a song, and he would give the audience a specimen. He did so, and sang the ditty the refrain of which runs—

For it's my delight on a shiny night  
In the season of the year.

No sooner had he sat down than there arose in the pit an actor who had not been arranged for. This was a local eccentric known as "General Jarvis."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "this is the vilest imposture I have ever witnessed. The people who have spoken are all actors, not gentlemen and ladies."

He did not mean exactly what he said; he only meant that those who had spoken were professionals and not lay members of the audience. He went on—

"Why, that man who got up there in the pit was Bruce Norton. *I* knew him. The woman who



spoke from the boxes was Miss Waverley Scott. *I* knew her. The man who spoke from the upper boxes was Mr. Tom Holmes. *He* ought to have known better. The fellow who has just sung was Little Gomersal. Does he think *I* did not know him? Ladies and gentlemen, the whole thing is an imposture."

All this diatribe was punctuated and accentuated by much gesticulation, and by peals of laughter from the audience. The unarranged-for actor made the biggest hit of the night.

The names mentioned by "General Jarvis" were those of the leading members of the company. There was also a Miss Villars who, I believe, subsequently made a high reputation for herself in light comedy in the metropolis. It was a really strong company. I have not often in later years seen a better performance than I have witnessed when the company was led by a star.

Of the merits of the leading actors and actresses of that day as I recall them I can say little. I have always thought Macready the finest Richelieu I ever saw. I was not greatly in love with Phelps. Creswick impressed me favourably. For the younger Kean I had no critical respect. G. V. Brooke, who was at one time a stock actor in another theatre in Hull, I always thought a very unequal actor, and, I am afraid, rather an unpolished one. These were my young impressions, and I have had no opportunity of revising them. They may be right or wrong, wise or foolish. Anyway, they were formed in the

course of my effort to educate myself in dramatic criticism.

For the purpose of musical criticism, I did my best, with limited opportunities, to study vocal music. Perhaps I was not very successful, though I think that at one time I really did know something about singing. Anyway, my knowledge, such as it was, and my thirst for knowledge, which was not easily quenched, brought me into association with many of the exponents of music. I never missed a concert or an opera. I tried—not very successfully—to interest myself in instrumental music. Probably I was as successful in this respect as the majority of those who then went into ecstasies over classical music ; but that is not saying much. Still I knew enough to ensure that if I wrote a musical criticism I did not write absolute and abject nonsense. My experience has been, that of all public performers musicians are the most difficult to satisfy. I never saw a musical criticism that was not denounced by somebody who knew, or thought he knew, a good deal about music. This is not said specially of my own criticisms, but of every criticism I have ever seen.

In those days of which I have been speaking, the Pyne and Harrison Company were the chief exponents of English opera. Of Miss Louisa Pyne I still love to think as of the sweetest singer I have ever known. Not Patti in all her glory has dethroned my favourite. Grisi, with her magnificent dramatic power, I had heard. Titiens and a host of others I can recall with pleasure. But

Louisa Pyne, for flexibility of voice and absolute purity of intonation, is with me an abiding and delightful memory. Harrison was a fine actor. He sang a good deal through his nose, and he was generally half-a-note sharp. But you forgot most of this in the dash and go with which he kept the stage.

Alfred Mellon was the conductor of the company. Of him I have the most pleasant recollection as a genial, kindly gentleman. He once told me a story against himself. He was conducting the orchestra at a Dublin theatre. It was midsummer, and the theatre was excessively hot. He thought that as a help to coolness he would dispense with the white kid gloves he usually wore when he wielded the baton. He took his seat in the orchestra and was beginning the overture, when a voice from the gallery demanded, "Put on your gloves, Misther Mellon ; put on your gloves." A laugh went round the theatre, and he felt some confusion. As the piece went on, the cry came again and again—"Put on your gloves, Misther Mellon ; put on your gloves"; and the consequent laughter somewhat marred the performance.

At last the first act came to a close, and in the interval Mellon thought he would compromise with his tormentor. Therefore he put a glove on his right hand before he went into the orchestra again, thinking that this would suffice. It would not do. No sooner did the performance begin again, than the voice from the gallery sounded forth—"Ah, now

Misther Mellon ; put on your other glove ; put on your other glove." All through the act the cry was repeated, to the immense amusement of everybody save Mellon himself and the singers on the stage.

Between the second and third acts, Mellon put on both his gloves, resolved if possible to silence his critic. The hope was vain. No sooner had he taken his place than the voice came again—" Bhoys ! Three cheers for Misther Mellon ; he's put on both his gloves." The cheers were given ; and at every pause during the act they were again demanded and given. Said Mellon to me, " After that, I never went into an orchestra in Ireland without having put on my gloves."

One peculiarity of the Pyne and Harrison Company in those days was that they carried their musical critic with them when they were on a provincial tour. Possibly this was a measure of self-protection. Assuredly some of the musical criticism—so-called—in the provincial papers was fearfully and wonderfully made. As in such cases it could not be improved by the resources of the paper itself, there was prudence and consideration for readers in having a skilled critic as part of the company. William Brough filled this post at one time. No doubt he had other duties ; but he certainly wrote criticisms of the performances.

One evening that I spent with the principal members of the company is fresh in my mind even now. The dinner-party consisted of Miss Louisa Pyne, her sister Susan Pyne, a light sweet contralto,



Harrison, Mellon, Brough, Ferdinand Glover, and myself. Glover was the baritone of the company. He had a beautiful voice, and I do not doubt would have achieved a high reputation if he had lived. Unhappily not long afterwards he died of small-pox.

In the course of the evening I said something as to reading at sight. Conversation on the subject ensued, and Harrison said, "Let us see what we can all do. Brough, will you write us a short sonnet? Alfred shall set it in four parts, and we (that is, himself, Glover, Louisa Pyne, and Susan Pyne) will sing it." Brough, with some show of reluctance, consented to his part, and so did Mellon. "But," said Brough, "you must give me a subject." Harrison proposed that I should choose, and I suggested that it should be in connection with music. "Make it," said Harrison, "in praise of music."

Brough went out of the room, and was away for about twenty minutes. He brought back with him a poem of eight lines. I remember only the first two. They ran—

"Hail, Music! To mortals of Eden bereft,  
Of pleasures, the purest, the sweetest that's left."

Mellon sat down at the table along with all of us, and in a very short time produced a four-part song, which was at once sung. The performance was repeated. I think of it now with pleasure and admiration.



## CHAPTER VII

Journalism before the abolition of the stamp—Growth of newspapers out of London—Their influence—Journalistic prospects—The impressed stamp—Michael James Whitty.

THIS is not a history of British journalism. It is nothing so ambitious. But what has been written will serve to show something of the condition of British journalism in the years immediately preceding 1855, when the impressed stamp was removed. Most of what was best in that journalism was to be found in London. Not all. Even then there were journalists in the provinces who might have been fitly compared with any of their brethren in the English metropolis. Some of them I could name, and may do so if the opportunity arises. But daily newspapers were practically non-existent in the provinces. The wants of readers were met by weekly papers, and in some cases, in large places, by papers published twice or three times a week. Those papers were to a great extent dependent upon the London dailies for facts outside their own locality, and in many cases, if not in most, for their opinions on general politics. To them the parish was everything; outside affairs nothing. I

remember one weekly paper in the provinces that recorded the *coup d'état* in France thus: "President Louis Napoleon has put down the French Republic. It is reported that he will be proclaimed Emperor. This may be of great importance to France." Alongside of this announcement was a three-column report of a squabble in a Board of Guardians, and a learned leading article on that squabble.

If it be said that this was an exceptional case, I reply that it was not; that at most it only exaggerated the usual disproportion of attention given to great public events and to small local matters. It is not wonderful that with such a state of things, writers on the history of newspapers have almost exclusively confined their researches to London journalism and treated their subject as if there was nothing worth saying about it out of London. No such excuse exists now. I venture to say that since the abolition of the stamp duty and of the paper duty journalism out of London has made vastly greater strides than journalism in London. I am not thinking of the circulation of newspapers. No doubt some of the London dailies, with a population of four millions at their doors, print and sell more papers than any like number of newspapers out of London. But in all that goes to the making of good journalism—in culture, in intelligent discussion of current events, in the collection of news, in literary merit—there has been a growth in the provinces that has not been equalled in London.

It is a natural consequence of this growth that newspapers out of London should have increased in influence. In such a matter as a general election they have far more influence than the London newspapers. It is in accordance with the fitness of things that they should have this influence. Their conductors are better able to gauge public opinion in their neighbourhood than are their London brethren. The talk of the clubs and Pall Mall is highly interesting; but it does not always reflect what the elector in the country, or even in London, is thinking. In 1880, shortly after the general election of that year, I was talking with Mr. John Morley. The leading London newspapers had all predicted that the result of the election would be a great triumph for Lord Beaconsfield. I know two or three Liberal statesmen who had been of that opinion. To me it had seemed certain that Mr. Gladstone would have a large majority; and the result of the election showed that I had been right. Mr. Morley asked me what were the grounds of my confidence—what reason had I for expecting a Liberal triumph? I told him, what was true, that I had diligently read the provincial papers—the papers of Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol, and others—and their tone, and the reports of proceedings which they gave, had convinced me that the London papers were wrong in their anticipations. Mr. Morley was interested, and, whether he thought I was right or wrong—as to which he said little—he admitted that the London

newspapers had misunderstood the signs of the times.

This incident is only mentioned by way of illustration of the point I wish to enforce—the growth of influence of the provincial newspapers. That is indeed beyond controversy. Some time before the stamp duty was abolished, the newspapers in the country had, so to speak, been straining at their bonds. Railways had given them a wider field. It was no longer the parish that required attention—it was several parishes. The electric telegraph had still further widened the area from which they drew their contents. It had brought to them the world beyond the parishes. I remember how it began. I remember the scraps of news it brought. When Parliament was sitting it became part of my duty to go to the telegraph office after midnight on the night before publication and write the brief report that then came to hand, as the clerk slowly read it off from his clumsy ticking needles. The telegraphic news in any paper of that day rarely exceeded a column in length.

The appetite for this telegraphed news grew by what it fed upon. More and more was demanded. Newspapers with capital began to find it to their interest to employ the telegraph wires to an ever-increasing extent. The field from which news was drawn was widened. Telegraphing was expensive; but it was soon found to be profitable alike to the newspapers and to their readers. More companies came into the field, and the competition which at



first arose increased the demand for telegraphed news. Speeches in Parliament and elsewhere, which had previously been forwarded by post or railway train, were now sent over the wires. At length "special wires" came into vogue. The *Scotsman* was the first to make a proposal on the subject to the telegraph companies, and it was promptly joined in the movement by other papers which could not allow such a step in advance to be taken and remain behind. An arrangement was made with the companies, and correspondents in London got together and sent the news the wires were to carry. For the "special wires" were from London to the place of publication. As London was the centre of imperial interest: as it was more or less the point to which news from all parts of the world found its way—manifestly it was desirable to tap it as freely as possible. I was the London correspondent first appointed by the *Scotsman*, and I hope that, without being accused of excessive vanity, I may say that I did something to indicate the best use to which special wires might be put. There were difficulties innumerable. One of the most formidable of them was the generally shaky condition of the wires, and the conditions on which they were worked. Many a time have I been grievously disappointed because the "copy" I had prepared could not be got through.

On one occasion my messenger had taken a batch of copy for the special wire which was worked, if I remember rightly, by the United Kingdom



Telegraph Company. Its offices were, I believe, in Broad Street. When the messenger arrived he could not get admission : the porter was fast asleep, and bell-ringing failed to awaken him. Again and again the effort was unsuccessful, and the messenger returned to me in despair. After thinking the matter over, I sent a message by the Electric Telegraph Company to the *Scotsman*, asking that the telegraphist of the United Kingdom Company in Edinburgh should signal to the telegraphist in London that the porter was not to be found at the doors, where copy was waiting for admittance. This was done. The porter who slept too soundly to be awakened from his door was awakened from Edinburgh. The copy obtained admittance, and was in due course telegraphed. I believe that about the same time the correspondent of another Scottish paper had a similar experience.

Soon afterwards the telegraphs were taken over by the Government, and then another expansion of telegraphic news took place. Mr. Scudamore, who managed the transfer for the Post Office, was a shrewd man. He was ably supported by Mr. Edmund Yates. He arranged terms as to special wires, and as to news copy, which were lower than the terms charged by the companies. Indeed the "press rates" had in view an enormous extension of the use of the wires by newspapers, and the estimates of that extension were soon exceeded. While, little more than a quarter of a century ago, the telegraphic news in a paper out of London

rarely exceeded a column in length, it is now measured by many columns. It is not uncommon—often for weeks together it is a daily occurrence—for the *Scotsman* to go to press with thirty to forty columns of news that has been telegraphed.

It was inevitable that with all this pressure of news, which began very slightly before the stamp duty was abolished, and has continually increased since, the provincial papers should grow in importance. Some of them had the foundations for expansion well laid. They had been conducted by able men, whose journalistic influence was fully recognised in their own spheres, and who only wanted the opportunity for exerting it more widely. The opportunity came to them with railways and telegraphs. The papers they conducted soon had less and less of what may be called a second-hand character. They began to get their news as early as the London papers, and they commented upon it with as much readiness, and with as much ability. At this time no newspaper of standing in the country would dream of taking its news or its opinions at second hand from London papers. It will discuss questions with those papers, commonly in a spirit of perfect independence, and with as much knowledge of the subject. How could it be otherwise? It is true the London newspaper of standing is, as to time and place, more closely in touch with ministers and statesmen. But the advantage is more seeming than real. No minister or statesman would think of ignoring the leading newspapers out of London.

The editor of such a newspaper may not deal with statesmen so frequently as his London brother ; but the chances are he knows as many of them, and is in as frequent communication with them. They trust him as much as they trust his brother in London ; and they keep him as well informed as to matters that may be known. The representative in London of the provincial newspaper can get almost every piece of information that is given to the London newspaper. Parliamentary debates are reported at greater length in leading provincial newspapers than in most of those in London — the *Times* excepted. Foreign news is pretty nearly the same in London and country newspapers. The latter give far more of general news than do the former. It is indeed scarcely an exaggeration to say that nine-tenths of the progress of newspapers in the last thirty-five years has been on the side of journals published out of London.

There is now no considerable town in Great Britain that has not its daily newspaper. In the larger cities and towns there are more than one. Of course they are not all of the same standing and influence. Once, in conversation with the late John Macdonald of the *Times*, I made some remark on the multiplicity of daily newspapers, which elicited from him an expression of opinion for which there is much to be said. He insisted that while daily newspapers might and indeed must increase, there would always be one in every district that in influence and position would be head and shoulders

above its rivals. "There will be one great newspaper in London," he said. "It may not have the largest circulation; but it will be the paper whose opinions are most thought of, if not most respected, on the continent, in London, and in England. It will be the same in the different districts of England—one paper will overtop the others. It will be the same in every town in England—one paper will overtop the others. It will be the same in Scotland. And," he added, "it will be for these leading papers to take care that by the judicious use of their capital, by their enterprise, by the fair use and not abuse of their influence, they not merely maintain but strengthen their position." It is possible that here I may seem to be trenching on controversial subjects. Newspapers are, most properly, jealous of their position relatively to their rivals. I would only remark, that with the principle of Mr. Macdonald's statement I entirely agree. Every journalist is at liberty to assume that his newspaper is the most important and influential of all the newspapers published in his district. All I seek to enforce is, that no history or sketch of the newspaper press at this time can have any title to be considered full and complete and fair which does not with adequate knowledge take into account the growth and present position of the provincial press.

It is a noteworthy fact that here and there in the country, journalists were opposed to the removal of the stamp on newspapers. Long inquiry preceded legislation on the subject. A Select Committee—I



am not sure that there were not two or three—took much evidence. It is not necessary to recite the arguments for and against the proposed removal of the stamp. It is enough to say that the anticipations of those who desired the repeal have been vastly more than realised ; while the fears of those who opposed it have been shown to be groundless. Nay, in several cases the men who opposed the removal of the stamp were greatly enriched by their defeat. They met the new state of things with energy and enterprise, and their journals flourished exceedingly—flourished to an extent that would have been impossible to them had the stamp been retained.

One of the warmest advocates of the abolition of the stamp, and of the freeing of newspapers, was Michael James Whitty. He gave evidence before a Select Committee, and, I am afraid, was regarded as absurdly enthusiastic. Yet even he did not imagine the progress that has since been made. He was an extraordinary man, and, surely, a born journalist. I think he started the *Liverpool Journal*. If he was not its founder, he bought it when it was in a poor way. He made it an excellent property. Then he sought for and obtained the post of Chief Constable of Liverpool, and sold the *Journal*. Without his guidance it faded, and in a few years it was in straits. In the meantime he had tired of playing policeman. He was hankering after newspaper work. He threw up his post, bought back the *Journal*, and began to build it up once more. Of course he



succeeded. He had all the qualities that were necessary for success in newspaper work, and perhaps some that might have been dispensed with. As soon as the stamp was doomed, he started the *Liverpool Daily Post*, and gave it a reputation which is not likely to suffer in the hands of my old friend and colleague Sir Edward Russell.

When I first knew Whitty the stamp had not been removed. He was one of the brightest talkers I ever met. Those who have admired the brilliant writing of his son Edward Whitty—at one time on the Thornton-Lewis *Leader*—may form an idea of what his talk was. The son was more incisive than the father, but not more witty. To me he was always kind.

## CHAPTER VIII

Change to London—The Reporters' Gallery in the House of Commons—Some experiences there—"Big - Endians and Little-Endians"—Old reporters—A debate on the Address.

IT was in 1861 that I went to try my fortune as a journalist in London. The growth of provincial journalism had then begun; but it had not affected to any extent the journalism of Hull. Grudging use was made of new opportunities. What had been was to be. That, at least, seemed to me to be the feeling and the prospect. Little foresight was needed to understand that in the race then begun, standing still meant retrogression. The Manchester dailies were making great running. The public wanted daily newspaper fare; and as it was not supplied by local purveyors, it was taken from the other side of the island. Our weekly papers were slowly dwindling. It would have been as reasonable to try a race in the old Arctic whaler *Truelove* against what has since come to be known as a "greyhound of the Atlantic," as it was to imagine that the old weekly in a large place could hold its own against the daily intruders from other parts. Besides, what chance was there for the individual

journalist who could spread all his thinking—if he did any—over a week, against the journalist who was accustomed to think more rapidly, and to show the results of his thoughts every day? Stopping in Hull meant dulness and decay. Going elsewhere might not drive away the dulness, but it would arrest the decay, and perhaps convert it into growth. It was an experiment worth trying. It might mean failure: the risk was worth running. I ran it, and have never had cause for regret.

After comparatively little looking about, I got an engagement on the Parliamentary reporting staff of the *Morning Star*, and I entered upon my new duties on the day Parliament opened in 1861—the 5th February. For me it was a trying experience. I had never been in the House of Commons before. I knew none of its forms. I did not know more than half-a-dozen members by sight. All these difficulties soon disappeared, and I came to love the “Gallery” better than anywhere else in connection with newspapers. There are few men who have been reporters in the Gallery who have not felt the same love. As a training school for journalists it has no equal. Not that the work is hard: it is not. But every debate—every question almost—is education in journalistic work. I have long been of opinion that there is no school like to it for a newspaper man who wishes to rise in journalism. Yet, curiously enough, comparatively few conductors of newspapers come out of it. Men leave the Gallery to go to the floor of the House of Commons. They

leave for the bar, and, later, the bench. They leave it for the work of book-making. But they do not, to any extent, go into the indoor work of newspapers. They think of that indoor work as drudgery, and they prefer the comparative ease of the Gallery. This is not wonderful. It is, indeed, but another proof that with many men there is a dislike of the striving by which success is attained. In 1861, when I went into the Gallery, it was not the comparatively luxurious place that, I understand, it is now. The architect in making his plans had evidently put aside considerations as to the health and comfort of reporters. The Gallery itself within the House of Commons was well enough. We were no worse off in it, so far as sanitary surroundings were concerned, than were the members of the House of Commons themselves. But when you got out of the Gallery you went into cells. There was a centre room from which you entered the Gallery. Probably it had been designed as a waiting-room for reporters who were not at the moment engaged in reporting. At each end of this room was a writing-room, with only artificial light. All the rooms were low-ceilinged, dark and dismal. If you remained in them for half an hour you were tortured with headache, if you had a head that could ache. To get to these rooms you had first to climb a narrow winding stair from Palace Yard below, then to pass through a sort of anteroom, and then along a dark passage. The anteroom was the only refreshment room. The purveyor was Wright the

porter. I never saw his bill of fare change. It was ham or corned beef, or ham and corned beef. Of course there was bread; and he made tea and coffee, I think—I am not sure about the coffee. Whisky there was and other drinks. I hear that now the Gallery can dine and rest itself on luxurious couches, and smoke in fine rooms, and enjoy a library, and in short lead a life of glorious ease. Happy Gallery! Is the work better done by better men than in the old days that I remember?

As it was impossible without deadly consequences for all the reporters to write out their turns in the dens behind the Gallery, one of the committee rooms upstairs, No. 18, was put at their disposal for the preparation of their copy. As everybody knows, the manner of reporting the proceedings in Parliament is simple enough. Each paper has a staff of so many reporters. Each of these takes a "turn" of a quarter or half an hour. That is to say, for such a time he goes into the little box provided for him in the Gallery and takes notes of what is done. At the end of his "turn" another takes his place while he goes out of the Gallery to write his report. As a rule he found his way to No. 18. As most of the reporters had "turns" of the same length, they came together to their writing out, and usually they compared notes. This, at any rate, was the practice with many of them. Some few had confidence in their own note-taking. Some had to write a longer report of a particular speech than had the others. Some did not think it quite fair that there should be



a sort of joint transcription of notes. Nobody made much of objections or objectors ; the practice went on without alteration. On more occasions than one I have known questions arise as to what a member had said. The acoustic properties of the House of Commons are not as good as they might be. Many members do, or did, not know how to speak so as to make themselves heard : they spoke in a colloquial tone, or they turned their backs to the Speaker, or they faced him too directly. Lord Playfair once told me that he had been assured by Mr. Gladstone that the best way of securing that you should be heard in the Gallery, if not also in the House, was to speak straight across the Chamber. It can scarcely be said that Mr. Gladstone practised what he preached in this respect. No member turned in more directions during a speech than he did. Lord Playfair had, he said, tried Mr. Gladstone's theoretical plan, and had found that he was always heard.

This is more or less of a digression. What I want to have understood is that the comparison of notes by reporters in No. 18 was not altogether unnecessary. I remember one curious illustration of this truth, which had its ludicrous side so far as I was concerned. It will not be forgotten that when the new Foreign Office and other offices were to be built in Parliament Street, some four or five or more architects competed, and a prize for the best design was awarded to one of them ; I forget who it was. Lord Palmerston was premier at the time. He did not like any of the plans, and he set them all aside

in favour of one that commended itself to him. Of course there was an outcry, and it was carried into the House of Commons. Mr. Beresford Hope led the crusade against Palmerston's choice, and one day he had made a speech and moved a resolution on the subject. He had been as severe as, what Mr. Disraeli called his "Batavian graces," would permit, and there was much curiosity to know what Palmerston would say in reply. Thus, when he rose, there was a rustling as of loose papers, and the sound of men seeking to be comfortable in their seats. Palmerston took no heed of this, but began: "We have all heard," he said, "of the battles of the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians. We have all heard of the battle of the gauges. Now we are to have a battle of the styles." I was in the box, and I caught his first allusion rather than his exact words. I sat down in No. 18 to write my turn, and I soon found that nobody else had been as successful as myself. I was young in the Gallery, and modest about talking of my knowledge; and while I desired to speak out, I did not like to begin. At that moment George Clifford, a member of the staff of the *Times*, and one of the truest gentleman that ever lived, came to me. I had known him through his brother Frederick, and he had been kind to my inexperience in the Gallery.

"Did you catch what Palmerston's first words were?" he asked.

"Yes. He said, 'We have all heard of the battles of the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians.'"

"Big-Endians and Little-Endians," said Clifford.  
"What did he mean?"

"You have read *Gulliver's Travels*, have you not?" said I.

"Oh, of course ; I see now."

In a minute or two the explanation went round, and every reporter had got the allusion correctly. Now comes my misfortune. I wrote the speech out ; it went to the printers. Those intelligent gentlemen—perhaps it was the "readers"—did not know of Big-Endians and Little-Endians. They had never heard of such beings. They had heard of battles in Western America among the Indians there. So they took pity on my ignorance and altered "Big-Endians and Little-Endians" into "big Indians and little Indians." Thus the report appeared in the *Morning Star*. It was cruel ; but even then I had learned to cultivate patience in dealing with printers. Bad language has no effect upon them. To tear your own hair over their blunders is only to make yourself prematurely bald without curing them. I kept on my hair when I saw the report, and said nothing : my feelings were too deep for utterance.

One mischievous consequence of comparing notes in No. 18 was that occasionally, when the comparison had resulted in error, it was difficult for the member who was misreported to set himself right. All the reports or almost all were the same, and the public naturally thought that where there was such general agreement in them, they must be right and the member wrong. Experience has con-

vinced me that nothing is more hurtful to the public, so far as reporting is concerned, than the collaboration of the representatives of different newspapers in the production of a report. Any report appearing in a score or a hundred newspapers, if it has a common origin, may and often does lead to mischief. Independent reports correct each other. They can be compared, and errors in one can be shown by reference to another.

Again I have got into a digression which is only indirectly connected with the Gallery as I knew it in 1861. The men who reported then were worthy of its reputation. I do not mean to cast any reflection on the Gallery now. No doubt to my great loss, I have few acquaintances among the reporters there. Some two or three of my old friends are, I believe, still at work for their papers: most of the reporters are, so far as my knowledge goes, new men. Perhaps there is more good shorthand now than there was in 1861; I do not believe there is so much good reporting. Some of the men of my day had reported speeches in the old House of Commons. Many of them were barristers. I should not like to say that every man was a gentleman in the true sense of the word; but I am sure that every man was jealous of the reputation of the Gallery. All of them had real reporting to do. Every newspaper that had a staff of reporters in the Gallery published good if not full reports. The *Times* had then, as it has now, the fullest accounts of debates; but the others had columns of speeches. All this is pretty



much altered now. At that time the London newspapers alone had admission to the Gallery. About this there is a story yet to be told. Having a monopoly, these London papers more or less abused it. Bit by bit most of them have given up reporting Parliamentary debates; and now what they call reports are more like a transcript of the official "Parliamentary Proceedings" than anything else.

Whatever else the *Morning Star* may have done or left undone, it gave attention to reports of Parliamentary doings and sayings. Its reporting staff was not more than half the size of that of the *Times*, and was smaller than that of any other paper. Yet its reports were often as long as those of the *Times*, and were almost invariably longer than those of any of its other contemporaries. The chief of the staff then, and, I believe, till the close of the career of the paper, was a tall gaunt man named Edwards. He was a good reporter. He was a most uneasy man. Intensely anxious that the work should be done well, he worried the members of his staff with incessant suggestions. They were good enough in their way; but most of them were as little necessary as would be advice given by the Speaker to the Leader of the House not to make a long speech with his hat on his head.

Yet Edwards was helpful. He taught his recruits how to do Parliamentary reporting on the principle of teaching a boy to swim by flinging him into deep water. When he found that a man could do his work, he took care to give him plenty to do. That



was not a bad way : though sometimes it seemed a little unfair. He had, from the reporting view, a contempt for the House of Lords which would have satisfied even Mr. Labouchere. No skilled man was, in his opinion, or at least in his practice, required to report the debates in the Upper House. But the House of Commons was wholly different. If there had been an editor of the *Star* at that time who had dared to cut down a Commons report, woe would have been his lot. There was no such editor. When, later, in sheer desperation I used to cut down a Commons report, I had to be invisible to Edwards for a week afterwards.

On the first day I was in the Gallery—it being the first day of the session—Edwards gave me the first “turn” of public business. Thus all the “Notices of Motion” fell to my lot. Such notices are not usually given very distinctly. I was not accustomed to the House. As I have previously said, I did not know half-a-dozen members by sight. No reporting experience of mine was ever more trying. Somehow I got through it.

In another respect those were happy and sensible days. The prolongation of debates on the Address had not then begun. Members kept their resolutions and their speeches for private members’ nights. It was not usual to repeat the same thing a dozen times. If there was anything to be said, it was said and had its effect. Business was done, not scamped. It is a remarkable fact that talk has increased as the reports of speeches in the London newspapers have

decreased in length. This is a phenomenon which may be commended to the study of those who have been in the habit of thinking that there is no worthy journalism,—that there are no newspapers deserving the name out of London.

That night when I began my London career, the debate on the Address in the House of Commons was over by half-past ten o'clock. The Address was moved; the leader of the Opposition made a speech; the leader on the Government side replied to him; two or three unofficial members spoke; Mr. Bright, who had no great love for Lord Palmerston and as little for Mr. Disraeli, commented impartially and forcibly on the shortcomings of both; and there was an end. The Address was voted, and the House next day got to business.

At the close of the session I was asked to do sub-editorial work for the *Star*, and early in the next year I was installed chief—and only—sub-editor of the paper.

## CHAPTER IX

Sub-editorial work long ago—William Black—"Liners"—"Fire Fowler"—The hangman's liner—The garrotting liner—The political liner—The ecclesiastical liner—Count Carlo Borromeo.

THIRTY-FIVE years ago the work of a sub-editor on a daily newspaper in London was not light. I don't believe it is light now, or ever will be. But I suspect that at the time of which I am writing the duties were more onerous in some respects than they are now. For one reason, there were fewer men to do the work; and for another, more attention was then paid to London-local and provincial news. There was less of telegraphic news, which, to some extent, requires little skill in condensation, and more of manuscript from the fluent penny-a-liner. I was the sole sub-editor of the *Morning Star* for several years, except for a few weeks when I had the benefit of the assistance of William Black. The opinion may be hazarded by me that he did not like the work. At any rate, he gladly accepted a commission from the *Star* to go as special correspondent to the Prusso-Austrian war; and when he returned from that expedition he never resumed sub-editorial work in earnest. It was a

short and sharp war. If I remember aright, he was absent only some six weeks. When he came back I asked him how he had got on with German while he was away. He laughingly replied, "Oh, I did so much with it, that when I got home I had almost forgotten my English!" He has regained it to some purpose since.

Mention has been made of "liners." For a long time I kept many specimens of their wonderful productions. Unfortunately these are now lost. So far as London was concerned, the work was fairly divided among different men. That is to say, some men took one kind of news, and some another. Fires were a specialty then of a liner named Fowler. If he did not invent "the devouring element," he made frequent use of it. He was also, if I remember aright, the inventor of another phrase which has almost become classic in the hands of grammarians—"He was a policeman, but his name was Smith." The smallest fire furnished him with the material for pages of flimsy copy, through which the sub-editor had to wade to discover if there was anything in it worth printing.

Other liners looked after inquests, others after street accidents. One was famous in ecclesiastical matters. The word "famous" is not improperly used, as will be seen by and by. Another of the fraternity, named Butterfield, was the chronicler of executions. He took every hanging, whether in London or the country, under his care. His customers were, to begin with, the evening papers.



They received the first draft of his copy. It was simply done. The story of the crime was told, and some conventional phrases were used as to the behaviour of the convict on the way to the scaffold. All this was written beforehand; but Mr. Butterfield usually arranged for a telegram from the place of execution when the hanging had taken place. Sometimes the telegram did not arrive; but the copy was sent in all the same. On one occasion he was premature. A man was to be hanged at some northern assize town. If I am not mistaken he was a tailor, who had killed his wife. On the morning appointed for the execution he had gone to a closet. Over his head was an open cistern of water. He got to this and drowned himself in it. Butterfield knew nothing of this, and sent his copy to the evening papers. In it he had some edifying phrases as to the behaviour of the convict on the scaffold. These were printed before the news of the suicide came to hand. Butterfield was looked on with disfavour by sub-editors after that. He was not greatly abashed by it: he demanded payment for the copy that had been used.

There was another story told of this man, which I believe to be true. A woman was to be hanged at Glasgow. There had been hopes that she would be reprieved. Even when she was on the way to the scaffold these hopes had not died away. Just as she got there, a telegraph messenger was seen trying to get near. He was waving a telegram. The execution was stopped to let him deliver his



message. It was addressed to the governor of the gaol, and everybody hoped it was the expected reprieve. The governor quickly opened it and found it was from "Butterfield, London," asking him to telegraph the fact of the execution when it had taken place. The poor, wretched woman, to whom a ray of confident hope had come, had then to be hanged.

It will not be forgotten that some thirty years ago a garrotting scare got up in London. Day by day the papers contained accounts of attempts to garrotte and rob foot passengers. Occasionally specific details were given. There was no mistake as to the alarm that prevailed. Letters were written to the newspapers complaining of the inefficiency of the police. It is the usual thing for the alarmed Briton to blame the poor police for everything they do and for everything they leave undone. I am not prepared to say that no persons were garrotted and robbed in London at that time. Possibly, nay, probably there were some. If there had not been, the scare could not have arisen. But that scare was, in the main, the production of liners, and principally of two of their number—brothers, I believe, named Geary. They furnished most of the reports of garrottings, and distributed the supposed outrages in the most impartial manner over London. No district was safe, if these reports were to be trusted. The brothers reaped a rich harvest while the scare lasted. It would have continued longer if they had not overreached themselves. One night

they wrote a telling story of a garrotting outrage in St. Paul's Churchyard. They killed the gentleman who was robbed: that is, they stated that he had died of the injuries he had received. The city police had never heard of the affair, and they were anxious to get particulars of it from the newspapers that had printed the story. They got all that could be given; but it was not much. There had been no murder, no robbery, no disturbance of the peace of any kind. The whole report was an invention. From that time little more was heard about garrotting in London.

Another "liner" at that time worked a special field. He was engaged in political affairs. I forget his name, but I knew him very well; for many times I saw him about reports he had sent in. He was one of a sort of joint-stock company. The others formed the meetings and made the speeches; he wrote the reports. He got the remuneration; they got notoriety. It will not be forgotten that there was a good deal of political ferment about that time—before the Reform Bill of 1867 was passed. Close observers of what took place could not fail to note the large number of new leagues and associations that were started. Nor could they fail to note that the same men seemed to be at the head of all these leagues. I am not speaking of that Reform League of which the late Mr. Beale was the figure-head. I am speaking of a number of other associations with more or less kindred professions, but not connected with Mr. Beale's League. All these associations

held their meetings in one place. It was, I think, in Wine Office Court, in Fleet Street. They met almost nightly and talked high politics. Their speeches were reported, and, in some cases, commented upon. The liner who furnished the speeches had handsome reward at the end of each week. At last a curious person connected with a newspaper made inquiries, and found that the men who made the speeches did so in conclaves of half-a-dozen in a small room. Those who were not speaking were smoking. One night they were representing this "league." The next night they were representing that "association." It was a manufacture of copy for the liner. I am not prepared to say that the reports he produced had no effect upon the politics of the time. I believe they had. It was generally believed that the associations were real, and that there was a weight of opinion behind them. The truth was what I have told. Possibly there may have been political movements later with as little substantial basis. But I am not sure that they have been of much profit to any industrious and ingenious liner.

Mention has been made of the ecclesiastical liner. He was a well-educated man. I believe he had had a University career, and that he had been intended for the Church. He could write well; and it was beyond doubt that he knew all current ecclesiastical questions pretty thoroughly. In newspaper offices he was known as the "Bishop-maker." The story ran thus: when a See became vacant, the

liner always sent to the papers, within two or three days, a short paragraph something like this :—" It is stated that the Bishopric of so and so will be conferred upon the Very Rev. Canon —— or the Rev. Dr. —— . The name of the Rev. Mr. —— is also mentioned in connection with the appointment." The next day another paragraph would be sent putting the matter a little stronger, as—" There is a decided manifestation of feeling in ecclesiastical circles in favour of the choice of" (a clergyman previously named) "to fill the vacant see." Lord Palmerston was at that time the great dispenser of ecclesiastical patronage, and the popular belief was that he was largely guided in his selections for bishoprics by the Earl of Shaftesbury. The theory arose that the latter was influenced by the paragraphs in the papers. He thought they represented a real body of opinion, and in this belief he recommended one of the clergymen named. Of course I do not mean to say that this was actually the case, I know nothing about the matter. But the theory as to the liner's work was as I have stated it ; and as a matter of fact clergymen whom he had named were chosen for bishoprics on more occasions than one. Hence the title of "Bishop-maker" bestowed upon the ecclesiastical liner.

Once this ingenious purveyor of news achieved a higher flight. There was some question agitating the Church at the time—I forget what it was. The liner took advantage of the fact and made many pounds out of it. He began by writing paragraphs describing the rise of a movement among some of



the clergy, whose names were not given on the ground that as they were going to deal with the doings of their ecclesiastical superiors, it was not desirable that they should be individually known. The paragraphs were printed. They increased in number and grew longer. Then the anonymous clergymen began to hold meetings and to make speeches. These were duly reported. They were certainly interesting, and soon they furnished topics for leading articles. I forget how the fraud was discovered; but discovered it was. There was no such movement as that described. There had never been such a movement. No meetings had been held: no speeches had been delivered. The reports were the invention of the liner. They were clever. He had contrived to introduce variety into them. While they were directed to the same end they did not advocate the same methods, and they were not in the same style. In short they might have been genuine: only they were not.

Yet the ingenious gentleman who prepared these bogus reports was only an imitator. He was not the inventor of the plan of action which he adopted. Some years previously, when the affairs of Italy were being much discussed, and when public feeling ran high against the Dukes and Princes and Kings that ruled over separate States in Italy, Count Carlo Borromeo made the acquaintance of the London newspapers, or they made his acquaintance. He came to them with stories of a movement by Italian patriots in London. They were



exiles from their native land ; driven out of it by the oppression of its tyrants. They were engaged in planning the enfranchisement of their much-loved country. Count Carlo Borromeo was empowered by them to ask the London papers to print an account of their doings. As the police spies of the hateful Italian potentates were everywhere, it would be dangerous for the patriots to be known, even in London. Their place of meeting must be kept secret, while what they said might be published.

Count Carlo Borromeo's offer was accepted, and for some weeks he furnished—of course for "the usual remuneration"—reports of meetings of the patriots. They never talked wild nonsense. There were no threats of bloody reprisals in their speeches. Everything they said was moderate yet firm in tone. Plainly they were men who were in earnest, and who might be trusted to carry out the designs they avowed. It was all a fraud. There were no Italian patriots. Count Carlo Borromeo was not a Count, not even an Italian. The exposure of his misdoing came about in this way.

One afternoon the Count called for some purpose at the office of the *Morning Star*. He was shown into the room of the sub-editor of the *Evening Star*, who at that time was a gentleman named Mannock. He was an Irishman. The Count began his story, and Mr. Mannock at once discovered in his English a strong flavour of Cork. When the interview was over, Mr. Mannock told Mr. Baxter Langley, who was then the manager of the *Star*, that he was sure

the Count was no Italian but an Irishman. Langley resolved to have the matter investigated, and, having got hold of the Count, demanded to be told the place of meeting of the patriots. The Count demurred. Langley insisted, and threatened to hand the Count over to the police if he did not give the address. It was in Wimpole Street, said the Count. "What number?" asked Langley. The Count did not know, but he could show the house. That, said Langley, would do, and they would go there at once. Again the Count demurred; and again Langley was resolute. They started: they got to Wimpole Street; the Count made pretences as to not being able to find the house. The whole imposture was in short exploded, and Count Carlo Borromeo disappeared.

Some months afterwards, Baxter Langley found himself in Reading, with no occupation for the evening. The only entertainment in the place so far as he could discover was a lecture on Mesmerism and Electro-Biology, with experiments, by a Doctor whose name he had never heard. I forget it now. Langley went to the lecture. It had begun when he got to the hall. No sooner did he see the lecturer than he identified him as Count Carlo Borromeo. The lecturer soon saw Langley, and for the moment was greatly disconcerted. In a minute or two he recovered and then took a bold course. Pointing to Langley, he denounced him as a persecutor of the innocent. The hall rang with his denunciations. The audience, or some of them,

turned fiercely on Langley, and he had to get out as quickly as he could. Before he could muster the police, the lecturer had fled.

Again years passed without any more trace of the Count. One day a certain Dr. Pritchard, a man of venerable appearance, was accused of abducting a girl from her parents. He had taken her to a coffee-house on the Westminster Bridge Road, and there she was found. He was sent to the Surrey Sessions for trial, and he was convicted. In the court Langley saw him. He was the former Count Carlo Borromeo.

## CHAPTER X

Samuel Lucas—Cobden and the *Times*—The *Morning Star's* editorial staff—Washington Wilks—Editorial teas—Want of supervision—Revising an article—Justin M'Carthy—Leicester Buckingham—Slow writers—Sala and easy writing—Cardinal Manning on Sala—F. W. Chesson.

WHILE I was sub-editor of the *Morning Star* I had for a colleague Mr. Justin M'Carthy. He was known in the office as the Foreign Editor. In truth, for a long time he did little else than write a leading article every day. The nominal Editor was Mr. Samuel Lucas, brother-in-law of Mr. Bright, and brother of that Edward Lucas who had become a convert to Roman Catholicism and founded the *Tablet*. Mr. Samuel Lucas was a Quaker—that is, he was of a Quaker family. But there was little of what is usually associated with Quakerism in his politics. In that region he was decidedly militant. Cobden was his dear friend, and I think Cobden's death brought his life to an end. At the time, Mr. Lucas was in poor health, and was living at Brighton in the hope of recuperation. The news of Cobden's death brought him to London, and to my room. He was ghastly in his paleness; and as he spoke



tears were in his voice. He sat with me for a long time and spoke of Cobden,—of their long friendship and close association in the great work Cobden had done. Cobden, he said, was one of the kindest men he had ever known. I said, “Did he not sometimes say unkind things of others—Palmerston and the *Times*, for instance?”

“Yes,” he replied, “he did, and he was right. But in truth what he said was proof of his kindness. His heart was set on great things—on the alleviation of the condition of the people; and he resented the action of those who more or less obstructed him.”

“But,” said I, “does not that mean that he could not brook opposition? Might he not have given them credit for being as honest and as desirous of the public welfare as himself?”

“He could not do that,” replied Lucas, “he saw that they attributed dishonest motives to him. He saw that while they could not attack his policy—at least of later years—they did attack his motives. Why,” said he, with a burst of indignation, “do you not remember how the *Times* attacked him for his pecuniary misfortunes! He had lost his money in working for the public, and, because those who recognised the great work he had done subscribed money for him, the *Times* spoke of him as if he were a begging-letter impostor. It was shameful. No, he was right to strike back. It was a case, if ever there was one, where St. Paul’s advice applied—‘Be angry, and sin not.’ Cobden did not sin in being angry. He was one of the kindest men I ever knew.”



The conversation showed Lucas in his true light—a real staunch friend, with an affectionate disposition ; a hater of those who despitely used his friend. If I am not mistaken he died within a fortnight after that conversation.

The editorial staff of the *Morning Star* consisted of Justin M'Carthy, Washington Wilks, Leicester Buckingham, Frederick William Chesson, myself, and the gentleman named Mannock before mentioned. Later it was joined by Mr. (now Sir) E. R. Russell, who subsequently edited, and still edits, the *Liverpool Daily Post*, and Mr. E. D. J. Wilson, now one of the leader writers for the *Times*. William Black's connection with it I have already mentioned. Before the paper was absorbed into the *Daily News*, I had removed to Scotland. Justin M'Carthy had gone on a lecturing tour in the United States. Washington Wilks was dead ; Leicester Buckingham was dead. Mr. John Morley was Editor at the time of the absorption, and had been in that position for about three months.

At the time when I joined the editorial staff, it was a very free-and-easy affair. Mr. Lucas, as I have said, was the nominal Editor. He never came to the office after dinner, and there was an understanding that supervision of the articles and the matter generally was in the hands of Washington Wilks. It was an understanding and nothing more. He rarely saw anything save his own article, and not always did he see that. He was a strange fellow, with more liking for public platforms than

for editorial rooms. I do not mean that such a preference is strange. Most people who have had experience of editorial rooms, and who could make speeches on platforms, would probably have it. Wilks was strange in his disregard of dress, in his disregard of accuracy, in his disregard of many social amenities. I have not a shadow of doubt that if he had lived he would have been a member of Parliament for an Irish constituency, and a follower, if not a rival, of Parnell. Mr. Sexton would not have been equal to him in verbosity and grandiloquence. Mr. Healy would have had a rival in plain speaking who would have run him close. Wilks seemed always anxious to live up to his name. How far he succeeded as to Washington I am not prepared to say; but he did well with Wilks. He had been editor of a paper in Cumberland, and had been brought to the bar of the House of Commons for breach of privilege in having made an accusation of corruption against a member of the House. It is said by good Americans that Washington never told a lie. Perhaps he did not. If he did not, there was a difference between him and Washington Wilks. On one occasion I pointed out to him that a statement he had made in a leading article was not true.

"Is it picturesquely stated?" he asked.

"Yes; but what of that?"

"My dear fellow," was his reply, "if the picturesque and the truthful come in contact, the truth must always go to the wall."

Wilks died suddenly on a platform at a public meeting which he was about to address.

It will be understood that practically the *Morning Star* did not get much editorial supervision in those days. Yet the work was well done. Every afternoon there was a meeting of the editorial staff. Tea was served in one of the rooms at half-past five o'clock. When Mr. Lucas was well, he used to be there. Topics for leading articles were suggested. Each topic was discussed, and finally the writer of each article was arranged. In this way each writer got help from all the others, and the result was excellent. Those were pleasant gatherings. I think of them now with the kindest remembrance. Sometimes a stranger would be present. I have seen John Bright there. No restraints prevented the free expression of opinion. Differences there were, of course. Even these were useful; for they enabled a writer to understand arguments against the position he was to take up. Anyway, it is safe to say that the writing in the *Morning Star* at that time was as good as that in any newspaper in the United Kingdom. I am free to say this; because I did not then regularly write articles.

The want of supervision, however, had an unfortunate effect at times. When Mr. Lucas was away, the articles were settled as usual at tea-time. After that everybody did what seemed good in his own eyes. On one occasion, while Mr. Lucas was at Brighton, Mr. Mannock wrote an article on some subject—I think it was a labour question. His

article was dead in the teeth of the policy of the paper, and in the teeth of what had been said at tea-time. Mr. Lucas wrote to me in great anxiety, and told me to urge Mannock to write another article by way of undoing what he had done. He wrote as requested, but began in one strain and ended in another. Mr. Lucas was furious. He was too ill to come to town, and he requested me to see that the mischief was undone by Mannock. I told that gentleman what was required of him, and he wrote once more. In accordance with the request of Mr. Lucas, I got a proof of the article and revised it. Mannock had made it worse than ever. The time was near when the article must go to press, and it was not possible for me to rewrite it. I remembered the story of the sinner who advised that the "nots" should be taken out of the Commandments and put into the Creed, and I peppered "nots" into the article, negating every argument and almost every statement of the writer. Mannock was not in the least displeased; he had no convictions as to the subject that could be hurt. Mr. Lucas was satisfied.

Wilks was, in one sense, the most forcible writer on the *Morning Star* at that time. Justin M'Carthy was by far the most scholarly and persuasive. It used to be said of Macaulay that he was a book in breeches. The same might be said of Justin M'Carthy. He had read widely; and he remembered everything he had read. I never knew a man with such a marvellous verbal memory. Rarely have I seen him use a book of reference,



yet his articles would often be studded with quotations, and they were always correctly made. He had an easy grace of style which is not common. He always knew his subject; and thus he wrote with great effect. Many things have happened since the days when we were colleagues to drive us apart; yet my friendship for him has not abated. I have regretted and criticised the course he has taken, and I have no doubt he has done the same as to myself. I do not think he can ever attain the highest eminence in anything. He is always pleasing, but never convincing. I mean that what he says and does leaves no lasting impression. What he wanted was a spice of the devil. If he could have got angry, he would have been a great man. Sometimes in his writing he seems to be getting nearly red hot; if he could get to white heat he would be the foremost writer of his time. In politics it is the same. He has more knowledge of the world and more constructive ability than all the rest of the party to which he adheres. But he cannot be angry; he cannot get into a passion; he cannot even simulate one. Thus he has been made a figure-head, and vastly inferior men are regarded as real leaders. He would have done better to have kept to literature.

At one time he was Editor of the *Morning Star*. About that appointment there is something to be said, which can do no harm if I say it now. When Mr. Lucas was failing in health he saw that there must be some editorial authority in the office while



he was absent. He was living then, if I remember rightly, in Gordon Street, Tavistock Square. One day he asked me to call upon him at his house, and I went. He asked me to take the acting Editorship of the paper. I told him that I did not think I was the fittest man for the post, and that Justin M'Carthy, who had been on the paper before me, was the man to whom he ought to look. He told me that he had thought the matter over and had fixed upon me, for various reasons, one of which was that I was a more practical-minded man than M'Carthy. All this was very complimentary and pleasant; but there was another reason in my mind which made the appointment impossible. I told him what that reason was. While I agreed with most of the policy of the paper, there was some of it from which I differed; and I could not make myself even theoretically responsible for a paper which was bound to advocate some views that I conscientiously disapproved. He argued with me that the responsibility would be his, not mine. But I stuck to my refusal, and he appointed M'Carthy. It is my pleasant conviction that the step was a wise one. It is a still more pleasant conviction that Mr. Lucas showed afterwards in his personal intercourse with me that I had his hearty respect.

Leicester Buckingham was one of the most handsome men I have ever seen. Finely moulded features were crowned with a head of dark curly hair. He was tall, carried himself well, and bore in every lineament the stamp of good breeding. He

was a slow writer. His caligraphy was exquisite at first sight and most difficult to decipher. He wrote with care, and, I believe, thought out every sentence before he penned a word of it. This slowness of composition made him troublesome to the printers ; for his article was always late. That trouble affected me, for I had the responsibility of getting the paper to press. Night after night the difficulty arose. Buckingham would begin about seven o'clock and on pressure finish his article by half-past eleven. The leader pages had to go to press at twelve. Fortunately he made few corrections, and therefore no time was lost with his proof. He was the dramatic critic of the paper, and in that capacity did most excellent work. The day had no charms for him ; it was the night he loved, and when he lived. After finishing his work on the paper he usually went to the Arundel Club. Most of its members were actors and dramatic writers. The Club-house was in a street off the Strand—I forget which of them. At it he spent the remaining hours of darkness, and in the summer time, two or three hours of daylight. I remember he told me that he generally took "supper" when he got home ; and he added that his favourite supper then was cold beefsteak pudding ! He died comparatively young.

While he was in the full flush of his press and club life he wrote several plays—adaptations from French pieces. They were always clever ; but I doubt whether anybody remembers one of them now. Several times he described to me his manner of

working on these plays. He would think about an Act till he had got it shaped in his mind. Then he would close the shutters in the window of his room, light the gas, provide himself with a few biscuits, and two or three dozens of pints of Bass. One of these pints he took every hour. He walked about till a speech or a sentence, which he uttered aloud, had been framed. Then he wrote it down. An Act usually occupied him nearly thirty hours—during which time he had no sleep, and, as I have just said, a pint of Bass per hour! For months before his death he was a wreck. He had been away to recover his health, and came into my room two or three weeks before he died. I never saw a more beautiful face; but the name of Death was writ large upon it. His fine luminous eyes were bright; he was ghastly in his pallor; his teeth were clenched, and he spoke through them as if he had not strength to open his mouth. He was cheerful, and talked of being back to his work in a few days. I never saw him again.

Buckingham's slowness of composition was often discussed amongst us. Naturally he held that writing to be good must be thought over; and he would repeat a common saying that easy writing makes hard reading. The two propositions may both be true, but they are misleading. What is written ought to be thought over; but there is quick thinking and there is slow thinking. My experience of writers has convinced me that your slow thinker is generally a dull thinker. No doubt there are exceptions, but few of them have come my way. As

to "easy writing," there may be many opinions. Your fastidious—perhaps I should say, your over-fastidious—man is apt to mistake sound for sense, smoothness for effectiveness, elegance for force. He polishes and polishes till he rubs out the quality that would make his writing effective for its purpose. My point may be illustrated by reference to public speaking. Some of our statesmen write their speeches : I know, for I have seen the manuscripts. Others do not, but make notes for points and speak as the words come. Mr. Gladstone takes this latter course; Sir George Trevelyan takes the first. Which is the more effective? Every sentence of Sir George's is framed well and has regard for the rules of grammar. Almost every sentence of Mr. Gladstone's is loose in structure, parenthetical, and often in defiance of grammar. It tells with an audience because it comes with freshness and vigour, and conveys a sense of earnestness that arouses sympathetic response. The written speech does not, unless the speaker is a good actor. The polish of the written speech is like rouge on the face of a woman : it is meant to simulate a glow of health, and it is not equal to nature's efforts in that direction.

I remember on one occasion travelling from Windsor in the same compartment with several other newspaper men. If I am not mistaken, we had all been to the funeral of the Duchess of Kent. George Augustus Sala was there, and Nicholas Woods, and Godfrey Turner, and two or three others. The conversation on the journey turned upon this subject



of easy writing. Sala quoted the saying about easy writing being hard reading. Nicholas Woods thought that there was a medium that was the best—that could not be spoken of as difficult writing and that yet was easy reading. Godfrey Turner chimed in with the assurance that he wrote easily. “I don’t,” said Sala. “How do you write?” somebody asked of him. “I write in agony and bloody sweat,” was the forcible if almost blasphemous reply. This was a blow for the opponents of the “easy writing, hard reading” theory; for no one then or since could compare Turner’s writing, for force or thought or elegance, with Sala’s. But it really only showed that at the time Sala wrote with difficulty; and I suspect it was only comparative difficulty. He was writing at most times under pressure; and if he did not get on as fast as he desired, he no doubt thought he was slow. I believe that of late years he dictated his productions. That does not mean slow writing. It is the resource of a quick thinker and a quick writer. My impression is that for all that makes for good work and easy reading, Sala’s latest productions may be compared without disadvantage with his earlier writings.

Perhaps while I am speaking of Sala I may relate another conversation in which he was mentioned. I was talking with Cardinal Manning (he was then only Archbishop), and our talk turned on literary men of the day. I asked him what he thought of Sala. “I have a great admiration of him,” was the reply. I was a little surprised; for, though, personally,



I believed with all my literary heart in Sala, I did not think he would have similar admiration from an ascetic Churchman.

"May I ask why you admire him?" I said to the Archbishop.

"Because he is so thorough. He knows almost everything well. He never writes of what he does not understand. If he is going to write on any subject he makes himself thoroughly acquainted with it from the bottom upwards. For instance: if I wanted an account of that table"—pointing to one in the room—"and asked Mr. Sala to write it, he would tell me of what wood it was made; where the wood was grown; what were its qualities; how it was handled. If it was foreign wood he would tell how it was shipped to this country. He would trace it to the cabinetmaker's shop, through the saw-yard. He would tell how every part of the table was made—with what tools and appliances. And he would be strictly accurate throughout. Those are the qualities in him as a literary man that I admire."

Few who know Mr. Sala's work—and who does not?—will question the soundness of the Archbishop's opinion.

But I have strayed from the editorial staff of the *Morning Star*. Frederick William Chesson, whose name I have mentioned as one of that staff, was the gentlest, most amiable, most earnest, and most persistent man I have ever known. He had married, while young, a daughter of a certain Mr. Thompson, who was known through the length and breadth of

the land as an Anti-Slavery and Free-Trade lecturer. This connection had brought Chesson into communication with Cobden, Bright, the Sturges, and a host of men prominent in political and philanthropic affairs. At the time of which I am writing, he was Secretary to the Aborigines Protection Society. I believe he continued to hold that post till his death. He was chiefly concerned with philanthropic and colonial movements, and when they were written about in the *Star*, he was given the work. He wrote neatly and well. It is not uncharitable to say that he admired what he wrote. There was almost a touch of pathos in the way he read his proofs. He dwelt on them with loving eyes. So to speak, he caressed his sentences. If there was any one in the room with him he would read out a passage here and there, and expect to have it approved. It always got approval. If it was not forceful it was full of good intention. If it was not rhetorical—and it never was—it was always sincere. He was a good fellow, who fought his fight fairly and with courage. A better man never lived.

## CHAPTER XI

The *Morning Star*—The *Dial* and the *Star*—John Bright—His opinion of Palmerston, Cornewall Lewis, Lord John Russell, Peel, Disraeli, Gladstone—Bright on Trade Unions—As an orator—Gladstone and Hennessey—Bright on Ireland.

AT the *Morning Star* office I saw a good deal of John Bright. He was, at that time, a director of the paper. Its position was peculiar. Years before, it had been started to support the principles of what was known as the Manchester School. John Bright had shares in it ; but if I am not mistaken the chief part of the property belonged to a Mr. Henry Rawson of Manchester. I think he was a share-broker. Some time after it had been started it was amalgamated with another undertaking, about which a word or two may be said.

A Nonconformist minister in one of the suburbs of London, the Rev. Dr. David Thomas, found, or thought he found, that the newspapers of his day were rather a power for evil than for good. Other ministers have had, and perhaps some of them still have, a similar opinion. Dr. Thomas was a reformer, and seeing this great evil he set about removing it. He insisted that a newspaper ought

to be a help and not a hindrance to the cause of religion. I am not discussing his opinions, nor am I questioning them : I am simply stating his views. He took action in furtherance of those views, and several other good men, some of them ministers, some laymen, joined him. He went all over the country, holding public meetings, and crying for a righteous daily newspaper. It was not to confine itself to sermons : it was not to ignore the news of the day. It was to be a paper that would fill the place of any other newspaper as containing what may be called secular news. But it was to be permeated with the spirit of religion. It was to be written by godly men for godly men. It was to uphold the highest standard of morality, and to eschew everything that those who agreed with Dr. David Thomas thought wrong. It could not be produced without money ; therefore pious men must take shares in it. I believe Dr. Thomas was successful in getting nearly if not quite a hundred thousand pounds subscribed to a company to realise the splendid ideal.

Getting the money subscribed was found to be less difficult than getting a daily newspaper started. Anyway, it was resolved to begin with a weekly paper. The world ought not to be kept waiting for a light to dispel its darkness, until the daily could be arranged for. It would be as wise to sit in the dark because the electric light was not installed, while a candle was available. The weekly was named *The Dial*. It was edited, if I remember



aright, by Mr. Peter Bayne, an able man who had been associated with what is known as religious journalism. Sad to say, the *Dial* did not succeed. It was ready to point the way. It had for motto "Righteousness exalteth a nation"; but its righteousness did not exalt it, in a pecuniary sense. It had not learned a lesson that has been sedulously taught in some directions since, that sensationalism in religious journalism is a tower of strength. There might be some interesting speculations on this point; but this is not the place for them.

The *Dial* had been intended as a sort of precursor of the great daily that was to come. It failed to convince the religious world that more money could with profit be given for the realisation of Dr. Thomas's ideal. What were the directors to do? They had many thousands of pounds, though not as many as would enable them to carry out the original idea. The weekly *Dial* would in time have drained the money all away; but a weekly paper was not what had been promised. There must be a daily. A thought flashed into the mind of some director, and stayed there. It was that a brand plucked from the burning is worth more than a brand that has never been scorched. It would be better to convert a worldly paper to the paths of righteousness than to start one that should need no conversion. The *Morning Star* was approached, and eventually the *Dial* Company and the *Star* Company were amalgamated.

I have reason to know that some of the pro-



jectors of the *Dial* did not think the result satisfactory. There might be righteousness in the paper; but there was a good deal of worldliness. The sporting news was an abomination. There were frivolous articles at times. Even prize fights were recorded. The strict *Dial* men could not see any difference between the *Star* and other dailies that were not associated with righteousness in joint-stock wedlock. Perhaps they were right. Everybody knows the story of the parrot bought by a pious old lady. It used the language of the forecastle, and she was shocked. She consulted her minister as to what she should do with the unholy bird. The minister had a parrot that sung psalms and said its prayers. "I will send my parrot to yours, Madam," said the minister, "and it will soon be taught goodness." The pious parrot went to the bad one. They were left in the same room; and before long the pious bird was using bad language and never uttering a prayer; while the bad one had learned no prayers, but stuck to its bad language. I am afraid the attempt to convert the *Star* to *Dial* ways failed in like manner. Before long the weekly *Dial* was also transferred to the *Star* office, put into the hands of Mr. Chesson, and—withered away.

This digression has taken me a long way from Mr. Bright and his directorship in the amalgamated companies. It need scarcely be said that in regard to the policy of the paper he and the politicians were stronger than the Rev. Dr. Thomas and his colleagues. Indeed, John Bright was stronger than

most men. He used to come into my room and sit for an hour or two, smoking all the while and talking as few men could talk. It was true of him that to know him was a liberal education. He has sometimes been spoken of as a narrow man. No charge could be more unfounded. I never met a man with wider sympathies, or with a kindlier toleration for those who did not agree with him. His Quaker education had not destroyed his fighting spirit. He did not turn his other cheek to the smiter. A Scottish Judge once said that he interpreted a well-known injunction thus—"If a man smite thee on one cheek, smite him on the other also." I am inclined to think that, in effect, John Bright read the passage in the same way. He was often filled with fierce indignation because of the doings and sayings and neglects of those from whom he differed. He believed that he himself was in the right. Did any man ever accomplish a great work, or any work, who did not believe the same of himself? If he was right, those who opposed him or obstructed him were wrong, and he spoke out against them. But I never heard him say an obviously unjust thing: I never heard him say an uncharitable thing of an opponent. I have heard him scores of times excuse those who assailed him.

Looking back at those times, and at what came afterwards, I think it may be truthfully said that no statesman ever was more nearly right in all that he did and proposed than was John Bright. He lived to see his greatest project realised and blessing the

country, and experience has shown how sound were his conclusions and how wise were his proposals for the welfare of the people. That was his one overpowering consideration. He left selfish motives aside in political affairs. He felt keenly for the sufferings of the poor, and he thought without ceasing how they might be removed or alleviated.

In the course of our many talks, Mr. Bright spoke freely of the statesmen and politicians of the day. His pet aversion seemed to be Lord Palmerston. He found little to admire in him. "He is an aristocrat to the tips of his fingers," he once said; adding, "I do not think that a sin; because I believe this country owes much to its aristocracy, and may in the future owe more. But his aristocratic feeling makes him contemptuous of those who do not agree with him. I should not like to say that he has no sympathy with the poor; but I am sure he thinks the country ought to be governed by, if not for, his own class."

I suggested that Lord Palmerston had on several occasions shown by his policy that he put what he believed to be the interests of the Empire before all other considerations. "Yes," was the reply, "he has; but the interests of the Empire in his mind are associated not so much with the material welfare of the people as with the greatness of the Empire as a Power."

I asked if he thought that the welfare of the people would be advanced if Great Britain sank in the scale of nations.

"No," he replied, "I do not think so. But I do think that with a contented and prosperous people there is more chance of holding our own than there is by an aggressive foreign policy and increased armaments."

The truth was that Bright hated war and all that pertained to it. But this was not all. Palmerston had never tried to understand Bright, and had on some occasions flouted him ; and I suspect the natural man was too strong for the Quaker.

Bright had a great admiration for Cornwall Lewis, and praised him often as a sincere man of the highest ability. From some things he said I thought he regarded Lewis as a pessimist ; but that did not hinder him from expressing admiration.

Earl Russell, then Lord John, was not one of Bright's favourites. I used to think that he had a contempt for the little statesman, though he never said in so many words that he had. He used to speak of him as able and cautious, and, in his way, honest. But he always expressed the opinion that Lord John could not see far before him. "He is never thorough," Bright said to me on one occasion. "He is willing to get the good opinion of others ; but he seeks to do so by showy rather than sterling measures." The Ecclesiastical Titles Act was mentioned by way of proof ; and there was quiet laughter over the contests between Lord John and Palmerston. "There is scarcely a pin to choose between them," said Bright one evening, "but Lord John is the honester of the two."



I think Bright never believed Lord John to be a convinced Free Trader. He spoke as if he thought the question had been taken up by the Liberal statesman to trump Peel's trick. Of Peel he always spoke highly. "He was far too good to be in the Tory camp," he once said to me, "and that is why they got rid of him."

From this it may be understood that he was not much in love with Disraeli. I never heard him say anything against the Conservative leader that indicated personal dislike; but he has quietly laughed at him many times. He did not believe that Disraeli was in earnest about anything save his own advancement.

"He will serve our purposes," said Bright on one occasion, "because he sees personal advancement in it."

I asked if he did not think Disraeli was a democrat.

"Yes," he replied; "he is, what you may hear more of in the future, a Tory democrat. He has no love for those who now lean upon him. He is a Tory because he is a Jew; and he is a democrat for the same reason, and because he sees the shallowness and worthlessness in a political sense of the old Tory aristocratic government. He has ability above most men of the time; he is not scrupulous; and he will use his ability to lead his doubtful friends into ways they have abhorred."

Let it be remembered that I am telling what Bright said.



Mr. Gladstone was frequently spoken of. Bright never under-estimated his power. "He is an honest man," said Bright; "he believes what he says. The worst of it is that he too readily believes what he wishes to believe."

"Is not that," I asked, "something like self-deceit?"

"No," was the reply. "Mr. Gladstone sees an object which he thinks of vital importance, and he turns in all directions for arguments in support of it. He finds them, and he becomes unconscious of anything outside of them. That is not self-deceit."

"But, surely," I said, "that is a dangerous quality in a statesman—that he should only be able to see one side of a question, and that the side he wishes to see?"

"No," said Bright, "I don't think it is. Every man who has done anything great in the world has been of that constitution. You cannot do a great thing if you have doubts of your own position and reasons."

"Still," I urged, "Mr. Gladstone might take a course that was in the opinion of most people likely to be ruinous, what then?"

"Oh, then 'most people' would have to fight him." He added, "I see your point and agree with it. Mr. Gladstone is like fire. He is a good servant and may be a bad master."

That Bright had a strong personal liking for Mr. Gladstone I never could doubt. It seemed to me that the religious feeling of the latter influenced

Bright, and appealed to him, who was profoundly religious. But he admired Mr. Gladstone for other reasons; and on one occasion at least he stood by his side, though he was more in accord with his opponents.

It has sometimes been said of John Bright, that outside his own questions—that is, the questions he had made his own—he was more sentimental than practical. That is not my opinion. We discussed many questions—not Free Trade merely, for it was virtually accomplished; or extension of the franchise, which was stirring the country; but other matters that affected the social as distinct from the political welfare of the people. Bright never allowed sentiment to affect his judgment on these questions. For instance, as to Trade Unionism, he always held that within what he regarded as its proper sphere it was good. He refused to condemn it because of the excesses that in some places had sprung out of Trade Unions.

“They have nothing to do with the cause of Trade Unionism,” he once said to me; “they are due to two things—defective knowledge and wicked leaders. There is no reason why Trade Unions should not help forward the industries of the country. There are many reasons why they should. As education spreads, as the best men come forward as leaders, Trade Unions will become of great benefit to the workmen and to the employers also.”

“But,” I said, “does not much depend upon the leaders? Trade Unionism is good in itself as

promoting the means by which workmen can provide against sickness, want of employment, and possible oppression by employers. But if they go outside these things, what then?"

"I do not think they will go much outside these things," said Bright; "though I think they may try to use their influence for political purposes; and I don't know that I should blame them if they did, though it might weaken them somewhat in their proper sphere. They have a right, if not a duty, to demand that the legislature shall not favour employers at their expense, or put them under any improper restraints."

"Still," I urged, "they may be induced to think that they can by legislative means fasten their rules and their wishes upon workmen who, without the compulsion of law, would not consent to submit to them."

"Perhaps they may," he replied. "I should not be surprised if they did; for it is the tendency of all earnest men to try to get legislative support for what they desire."

"How should you regard such attempts?" I asked.

"All would depend upon what was demanded. If they asked for legislation to compel all workmen to belong to their Unions, I should oppose them to the utmost. They might seek to get a legal limitation of the hours of work. If they did, I should oppose them. I do not believe the Trade Unions of skilled artisans, as we know them, will propose

such laws; but if Unions arose among unskilled workers, they might. Still, the stronger their Unions the less excuse would there be for demands for legislative interference. They could get what they wanted for themselves without the interposition of Parliament."

"You would not interfere with the Unions by law?" I asked.

"Not unless they sought to invade the liberty of others. The whole matter is really very simple. Remove restraints; give freedom so that masters and men can make their bargains without the interference of law. If this be done, and we are doing it, the workmen can fight their own battles as well as the masters."

This was indeed Bright's great principle. The theory that all men are equal before the law, he sought to make into hard fact. He would no more have supported the proposals that have become so common of late, to impose restraints upon men capable of judging for themselves, than he would have thought of fixing by law a certain wage for all men.

No man in public life ever made more impression upon me than Bright. To my thinking, he was the greatest orator of his time. I place him distinctly before Mr. Gladstone. I heard Bright in his early Free-Trade days, and I heard him later, and I never saw reason to alter the opinion just stated. I have heard Mr. Gladstone speak on many occasions. No man has ever succeeded better in impressing



those who heard him. I remember on one occasion—I think it was on a Wednesday afternoon—Mr. Pope Hennessy, who then sat as a Conservative for an Irish constituency, made an attack upon Mr. Gladstone for his famous Neapolitan letters. Nothing of the sort had been expected. It was the springing of a mine. Mr. Gladstone rose when Hennessy sat down, and spoke in reply for more than an hour. It was a magnificent speech. He was cheered to the echo. So enthralling was the speech, that men seemed to lean forward towards the orator, and some of the reporters in the Gallery forgot to make their usual “turns.”

Yet to my thinking that speech was not so fine as one made by Bright in the same place. If I am not mistaken it was at a Saturday sitting. There was a bad state of things in Ireland, and the House of Commons had been asked to sit to pass a Bill suspending *habeas corpus*, or something of the kind. Mr. Gladstone was a member of the Government. Bright rose in a crowded House, not to oppose the Bill, but to implore the Government and Parliament to try some other means of governing Ireland than the one method of repression. He did not deny that crime must be put down and punished; but he insisted that causes of discontent should also be removed. It was in that speech he said he had sometimes thought that if Ireland could have been unmoored from her fastenings in the deep, and floated two thousand miles farther to the west, how different might have been the state of her people.

It is safe to say that in the crowded House there were not twenty men who did not think that Bright was making mischief. Yet, as they listened, his words told with them. There was no loud cheering; but from every quarter of the House came increasing approvals. At the time it seemed to me as if Bright's speech was like a mighty and irresistible wind sweeping over the sea, keeping down the great waves, but tearing from them incessant sprays of spindrift. Under Mr. Gladstone the waves rose. He was delighting those who heard him. Bright was convincing them. I have never doubted that from the speech on that Saturday have sprung many, if not most, of the remedial measures for Ireland that have been passed of late years.

When I left the *Morning Star*, Bright at his own instance wrote me a letter, the kindness of which I can never forget. Two or three years afterwards I met him in Edinburgh one Sunday morning as he was returning from the Friends' Meeting-House to Newington House, where he was staying with his brother-in-law — Mr. Duncan M'Laren. We got into conversation, and he spoke a good deal about the British policy in the East. He no more liked the turn matters were then taking in that direction, than he had liked the Crimean War. Many times afterwards I met him, and always found my admiration of him strengthened.

The last time I spoke to Mr. Bright, we had met

in the lobby of the House of Commons. It was after Mr. Gladstone had adopted a Home Rule policy. I shall not soon forget the warmth of Bright's congratulations that he and I were in the same camp against the Irish demands and Mr. Gladstone's concession. "I am," he said to me, "for full measure of justice to Ireland. Nay, I think, when I remember our past misgovernment of her, we might go beyond the strict claims of justice, and bestow favours. But I am not for making Ireland master of England, and I am not for handing over the government of Ireland and the interests of her people to men who have apologised for crime, if they have not encouraged it, and who have taught Irishmen not to pay their debts and not to obey the law."

## CHAPTER XII

Reform days—Lowe and Horsman—The "Ten Minutes Bill"—Household suffrage—Mr. Gladstone and the Bill—The Tea-Room Conference—Mr. Gladstone resigns leadership—Mr. Bright's attitude—The Reform League—Mr. Beale, Bradlaugh, the League, and Mr. Walpole—The agitators—Sir W. Adam on popular movements—Garibaldi in London—The Princess of Wales's arrival—Hard descriptive work—Disembarkation of the Princess—Meeting of the Royal couple.

It is a matter of political history that in 1865-66 and 1867 the Reform agitation was at its height. Lord Palmerston had died just after a general election that had given him a large majority. Extension of the franchise had been played with for years before. Lord John Russell had shed his historic tears when his Bill had been withdrawn. He and Mr Gladstone had taken up the reins when Palmerston died. They brought forward a Reform Bill, and it was defeated. Those were the times when Robert Lowe made a great reputation as an orator, which reputation he did not retain in after-years as a financier. It was of him and Horsman, and those who went with them, that Bright said they made a political cave of Adullam. It was Lowe and Horsman who were described by Bright as



leaders that reminded him of a Skye terrier—you could not tell which was the head and which the tail. Horsman, by the bye, had previously been in a Government as Secretary for Ireland, and had resigned the post on the ground that it was an office in which there was nothing to do! If he was right then, there has been a great change since.

Mr. Gladstone, then, had been defeated on the question of Reform, and Lord Derby and Benjamin Disraeli had come into office. They were in a minority in the House of Commons, and the agitation for Reform was increasing in the country. They could not avoid the question, and personally I do not believe that Disraeli desired to avoid it. Their early efforts are matters of history. Most men who have read the records of that time, or who lived through it, will remember the famous "Ten Minutes Bill." I was in the Gallery of the House of Commons and heard the speech made on the introduction of that measure. When it was finished, one of the older reporters said to me, "That is an end of your friends. That measure will dish them." My "friends" were the reformers. I ventured to express doubts on the subject, and offered a wager that the Bill would never be read a second time. It never was. Disraeli had desired household suffrage. He had prepared his Bill. It was objected to at a Cabinet Council, and, on the pressure of some of his colleagues, it had been altered in "ten minutes" to the measure actually produced. He knew it would not do; but he had to convince his friends—to

"educate" them, as he afterwards said ; therefore he went through the farce of presenting, as if it were serious, a Bill that could not be accepted.

An immediate effect of this course was to intensify the agitation in the country. About that agitation I shall have something to say presently. It is not too much to assert that in the House of Commons the Bill was laughed out of existence ; and then Disraeli produced his own Bill basing the franchise in boroughs on household occupation. It had many supposed safeguards in what Mr. Bright called "fancy franchises." It is often forgotten that Mr. Gladstone opposed the Bill, or rather sought to have it converted into a rating franchise Bill. He was the leader of the Liberal party in the House of Commons, and he wished to move an amendment to the Bill which would have destroyed its principle and greatly narrowed its scope. Then it was that the "Tea-Room Conference" was held. Several members of the Liberal party desired household suffrage. They said, "Let us take the Bill in principle. It will give household suffrage. We can knock away the 'fancy franchises' and make it what we desire." This view prevailed. They refused to support Mr. Gladstone's amendment, and in disgust he threw up the leadership of the party. Mr. Crawford, one of the members for the City of London, was the medium of communication between Mr. Gladstone and the party ; and in the end Mr. Gladstone resumed his position on the Tea-Room party's terms.

If these sketches were in the nature of political essays or discussions, much might be said as to this incident, which had a counterpart in the affair of 1874-75. But it is no business of mine here to express opinions on party questions. The incident is mentioned because it helps to make intelligible much that follows.

At that time Mr. Bright stood by Mr. Gladstone, though assuredly he thought him wrong. As I have before said, Bright did not believe in Mr. Disraeli's honesty of purpose, and he did believe in that of Mr. Gladstone. That is to say, he believed that through Mr. Gladstone at the head of the Liberal party a more effective Reform Bill would be got than through Disraeli. Events showed that he was wrong, at least on the latter point. His influence with the *Morning Star* was not allowed to interfere seriously with its attitude. It was for household suffrage; and, while it found excuses for Mr. Gladstone, it did not disguise its real sympathy with the Tea-Room men. The office was, indeed, one of the consulting places of those who were managing the chief Reform agitation in London, and there I saw several of them.

The Reform League, as it was called, had for its chairman a Mr. Edmond Beale. He was a barrister, and in later days he was made a County Court Judge. At the time he would have thought it an insult to be told that he was only the figure-head of the movement. I thought him rather a dull man, who was very much in earnest about Reform and who

could make speeches that at least served to pass time. He did not manage the movement: it managed him. There were other and, I was going to say, less scrupulous men who kept up the agitation in a skilful manner. They knew what they were doing, or what they meant to do, and his movements were arranged for him. That he was honest I never doubted; neither did any one who knew him. Of course he thought he was riding the whirlwind, and he also thought he was directing the storm. He attended Hyde Park meetings, and made speeches, and was denounced by those who did not believe in the agitation. It will be remembered that one of the events of that agitation was the throwing down of the Hyde Park railings. Meetings in the Park had been prohibited. A crowd marched in procession to the Park. The railings were thrown down, the crowd entered, and there was some scuffling with the police. I have never been sure that the throwing down of the railings was premeditated. My belief is that it was an accident. The crowd was great, the pressure tremendous, and the railings rotten. Hence what happened.

In connection with this incident a story was told me by one who is, at the time I write, a member of the House of Commons, and has been for nearly twenty years. He had good means of knowing the doings of the "inner circle" of the Reform League, and it is on his authority that I give the story:—

Charles Bradlaugh was a member of the "inner



circle." So was the Baxter Langley whom I have mentioned in an earlier chapter. There were five or six others more or less like unto Langley. They had resolved that there should be a riot in London, so as to convince Ministers that there must be no trifling with the question of Reform. One feature of the demonstration was to be the firing of London in various places. The whole matter had been arranged. Greek fire, or something of the kind, was to be carried by chosen men in a procession to Hyde Park, and was to be used when conflict with the police arose.

Bradlaugh became alarmed about this, and he went to Mr. Walpole, who was then Home Secretary, and divulged the plot to him. The good and wise old statesman did not rush into extreme measures. He informed the impeached men that he had heard from Bradlaugh what they proposed to do. He warned them that he would take steps to thwart their schemes; and that if any fire took place he would have every man of them arrested and made responsible. They were disgusted, and they denounced Bradlaugh for what he had done. There was no fire. Mr. Walpole had disposed soldiers and police so that there was no serious riot.

That is the story as it was told to me, and I have no shadow of reason to doubt that it is true in all respects.

Many of the more or less prominent leaders of the agitation were not, as I thought, honestly intent on getting an extension of the franchise as a means

of benefiting the country. There was a flavour of self about all they did which to me was not satisfying. Perhaps it is the same in all agitations.

On one occasion a politician, then prominent and now in retirement, was discussing this very point with me. Perhaps I was more enthusiastic, if not also more credulous, than I am now. I expressed the opinion that in really great popular agitations the best men took the lead. "The cream always comes to the top," I said. "So does the scum," was his pithy rejoinder. He was in favour of the agitation because he sincerely desired extension of the franchise; but he regarded many of those who put themselves forward in the movement as nothing more or better than useful tools.

In an earlier chapter it has been told how an industrious penny-a-liner made "copy" and money out of the sayings and doings of men who called themselves this "League" or that "Association." So far as I know, they received no direct help from the Reform League; but assuredly they were part of its stage army. Through reports in the papers they marched on with trumpets blaring and flags flying, now as this body, now as that. The noise they made was great, and people thought there must be strong popular opinion behind them. To me, thinking over it all since, the imposture, for it was nothing else, has seemed infinitely amusing.

Once I was discussing the matter with Mr., afterwards Sir William Adam, who died Governor of Madras. No one knew more than he did of the

secret springs of agitation. He was at the time the whip of the Liberal party.

"What a sham most of these so-called popular agitations are," I had said.

"In one sense they are," he replied. "In another and a most important sense they are not. You may take it for granted that people who do not suffer from actual and visible oppression will not of themselves rise in agitation. A political reform is not enough to stir them. They may think it desirable if they think of it at all, but they will not of themselves insist that it shall be granted. Therefore some one, who sees the good it will effect, must move them."

"All that is obvious," I said, "but it does not prove the necessity of sham Associations and clamorous false pretences."

"Oh yes, it does," he replied; "though I should scarcely use the descriptions you give of the means adopted to rouse the country in 1866-67. Mankind, and especially British mankind, are so constituted that they will follow the strongest battalions. Of course there are many exceptions; but that is the rule. If you make them believe that there is a general uprising for a particular object, depend upon it there will be a general uprising. Sham Associations become real, and before long the movement is actually what it professes to be. Making believe, and especially making other people believe, is a vital part of the politician's armoury."

"If that be adopted as a general principle," I

said, "it must apply as much to bad objects as to those that are good."

"No doubt it does," replied Mr. Adam. "Do you suppose that no bad objects have been furthered by what I suppose you would call manufactured agitation? The worst of the method is that it can be adapted to bad objects as well as to good ones. But that is no reason why those who have a good object should not use it. You might as well say that I ought not to ride in a railway carriage because it can be used by card-sharpers."

I was not convinced of the validity of this justification, but that it is held in very common belief no one can doubt. How else can we account for many of the phenomena of political agitation that we have witnessed in these later days? The appearance of general feeling, and not the reality, has effected many changes in our laws and institutions which have not been of unmixed advantage to the country. Perhaps there will be more in the future.

These political moralisings have taken me far away from my *Morning Star* experiences. Let me glance back at more of them. For some reason, though I was sub-editor of the paper, I was frequently asked to write descriptive reports of public events. As a descriptive writer I was present at the funeral of the Prince Consort, as previously I had been present at the funeral of the Queen's mother, the Duchess of Kent. I witnessed the arrival of Garibaldi in London. Only on one



other occasion did I ever see such enormous crowds as had gathered to welcome him. He alighted at the Vauxhall Station, and a carriage was to convey him along the streets to the Duke of Sutherland's house in Cleveland Square. There was to be a procession of carriages, and of course the pressmen had one or two. It was to be an easy ride to the Duke's house! Vain expectation. Garibaldi was late in arriving. The procession was late in starting. The crowds were enormous. Nothing the police could do could prevent the enthusiastic people from breaking in on Garibaldi's carriage and between it and the other carriages. The procession was broken up. Hours were spent in getting to Cleveland Square, and some of the carriages never did get there. But the demonstration was magnificent. The enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. Every house along the route was decorated. Every window was occupied. Almost every roof had its onlookers. Men cheered till they were hoarse. Women waved handkerchiefs and flags. It is not wonderful that Garibaldi was delighted with his reception.

Yet, a few days afterwards, there were difficulties arising out of the visit. Some foreign Powers were angry, or professed to be, that Garibaldi—soldier of fortune, conspirator, and what not—should be treated so royally. Uneasiness arose among the friends of Garibaldi and Mazzini. There was a meeting at the office of the *Morning Star*, at which Mr. Joseph Cowen and three or four others were present. They

were full of the "intrigues of Palmerston" to get rid of Garibaldi. They professed to know all about it, and spoke bitterly. I do not believe they knew much for certain, but they thought they did. They could do nothing; and nothing, so far as I know, was done. But Garibaldi's visit was shortened.

It is in reference to his visit that a story is told of Lord Palmerston. Ministers were troubled as to what they should do to avoid complications arising out of Garibaldi's welcome in this country. "Let us get him to marry the Duchess of Sutherland," said Palmerston. "But," objected one of the Ministers, "he has a wife already." "Oh," was Palmerston's reply, "we'll get Gladstone to explain her away!"

When the Princess Alexandra of Denmark came to England to be married to the Prince of Wales, the demonstrations of enthusiasm were in excess of those that greeted Garibaldi. The crowds were as great, and the other marks of delight and welcome were greater. Even as to the crowds there was, in one respect, no comparison between those that welcomed Garibaldi and those that welcomed the Princess. Garibaldi only travelled in London from Vauxhall to Cleveland Square. The Princess travelled from the Bricklayers' Arms Station on the Kent Road to Paddington. The length of Garibaldi's line of march might be two miles; that of the Princess could not be less than six. At any given point, the crowd was as great in the one case as in the other; but think of the additional miles of people who greeted the Princess!

The coming of the Princess is fixed in my mind because it was the occasion of as hard a piece of work as ever I did. About ten days before the day of arrival, I was asked to take the matter in hand. The time of arrival, the line of route, and other matters had been settled. What was asked of me was that I should go to all the points of interest along the route, note the preparations, and write such a consecutive account of them as would, with a few words from men stationed along the line, make a long report of the event. It was to be used in that way in the *Evening Star*, and the facts in it were to be used by different reporters of the procession, in the *Morning Star*.

The day of arrival was a Saturday. I began my task of note-taking on the previous Monday. I was at work as sub-editor till three o'clock every morning. I lived two miles away from the office. By nine o'clock in the morning I had to be out on my mission, and the work of that mission usually occupied me till four or five o'clock in the afternoon. Then I began my sub-editing again. In the five days up to Friday night I went to Windsor at the one end and Gravesend at the other. I noted all the decorations at Paddington and Bricklayers' Arms, and on every foot of the way between. On Friday evening, a colleague took up the sub-editing, and I set to work to write out my notes. I am afraid to say how many columns I wrote in the next nine or ten hours. It was four o'clock in the morning when I had done. Then I went home with no time

to sleep ; for I had to be down at London Bridge or some pier near there early in the morning to get on board a steamboat chartered to take a party of us down to Gravesend to witness and describe the disembarkation.

That was one of the pleasantest sights I ever witnessed. Men-of-war had not then become ugly, kettle-like structures. They had masts and yards, and sailors who could stand on the yards. Some of them were lying off Gravesend. The yacht on which the Princess had crossed the sea was moored to the pier. When the train arrived bringing the Prince to meet his bride, the ships of war fired salutes, the yards were manned, fresh bursts of bunting rolled out, and cheers, as the reporters say, "rent the air." It was a spectacle to be remembered. The big ships towered up ; the river swarmed with steamboats ; the steamboats swarmed with passengers. There was not a point from which anything could be seen even with a telescope, that was not occupied. The crowds cheered as the men-of-war's men cheered. Handkerchiefs, flags, anything and everything that would make a show, were waved and flaunted hither and thither. The colouring was superb in its glow ; for women had donned their best and brightest, and men had got out of sombre clothing.

Fine as all this was, one incident remained which for me was the most impressive. Our steamboat had floated to the side of the royal yacht, which had a deck-house or saloon the sides of which were glass.



Thus we in the boat could and did see what passed in the saloon. The Prince boarded the yacht and entered the saloon. The Princess came from her cabin to meet him, and in an instant she was locked in his arms and being kissed by him. We are often told that marriages of princes are affairs of policy with which personal affection has nothing to do. Here was an exception. The demonstrations of joy in all directions were not mere fashions of loyalty. They were not rejoicings over the union of monarchical interests. They were the glad recognition of the fact, universally accepted, and proved by the incident I have described, that the union was one of hearts.

When the Princess had disembarked, our steamboat crossed to Tilbury, and we took rail to Fenchurch Street. As I passed under London Bridge on my way to the newspaper office, the Royal Procession had not arrived, but the crowds assembled were enormous. Late that afternoon I left the office in a downpour of rain. No cab could I get; and when I arrived home I was perhaps the most weary man in the three kingdoms.

## CHAPTER XIII

The paper duty—Its abolition—The *Star's* diseases—"Readings by Starlight"—Richard Whiteing—Severance from the *Star*—John Gorrie—Last days of the *Star*.

SINCE the days of which I have been writing there has been an enormous growth in the value and importance of most newspaper property. The penny morning paper has become a prosperous institution. One reason for this is not far to seek. Thirty-six years ago there was a heavy duty on paper. A short time previously the advertisement duty had been repealed, and the impressed stamp, which formerly had been obligatory on all newspapers, had been made optional, for postal purposes only. It is now altogether abolished. The paper duty raised the price of paper not merely to the extent of the duty, but by narrowing the field of manufacture. High-priced paper was not compatible with low-priced newspapers. There were several sold at a penny; but they depended solely upon their advertisements for their profit, and there was no margin for profit on circulation. The result was that newspaper enterprise was crippled; the public were deprived of news of great interest to them;

and, as a matter of fact, the cause of education suffered.

In 1860 Mr. Gladstone, being Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed the abolition of the paper duty, and carried his Bill through the House of Commons. It had been opposed on the ground that there were other taxes pressing on the food or comforts of the people that ought to be placed before it for repeal. The House of Lords took this view and rejected the Bill. Instantly from all the penny daily newspapers there went up a cry against the House of Lords. What could be more natural? In the *Star* there was printed every day in large type above the leading articles the statement that so many thousands of pounds were being extracted that day from the pockets of the people on the sole authority of the House of Lords. It was not quite true; for nobody pretended that the penny newspapers would be sold at less than a penny if the tax were repealed. It was their proprietors, then, rather than the taxpayers generally who were suffering. But it was a good weapon for its purpose, and that purpose was good.

It is a matter of history that the next year Mr. Gladstone again carried his proposal, and by making it a "tack" to the general finance Bill, compelled the Lords to pass it. The result has surpassed all expectations. Paper can now be bought for little more than the amount of the duty then levied. Cheap newspapers are printed in thousands in place of hundreds. Every city and town in the United

Kingdom of any importance has its two or three or more daily papers. The production of paper has enormously increased, and thousands of additional workers have been employed in the industry. It is not for me to estimate the beneficial educative results. I believe them to be enormous.

While the agitation for the removal of the stamp duty and the paper duty was going on, the obnoxious imposts were always spoken of as "taxes on knowledge." It was a correct description of them: for surely, in so far as knowledge is obtained through the medium of printed matter, to tax the paper upon which that matter is printed is to tax knowledge. I do not believe that any newspaper worked more strenuously for the removal of the paper duty than did the *Star*, and I do not believe that any newspaper did better service in the cause. I am speaking of newspapers in London. In a previous chapter I have spoken of the efforts of some newspapers in the country, and especially of the efforts of Michael James Whitty in Liverpool. There was a difference. He fought mainly for the removal of the impressed stamp upon newspapers; the *Star* was fighting for the removal of the paper duty. It had, I think, only come into existence on the abolition of the stamp, which was the worst of all the taxes on newspapers, though all—advertisement duty, stamp duty, and paper duty—were bad. The stamp had been at one time sevenpence, subsequently fourpence, and finally a penny. When it was a penny it carried a news-



paper not more than a certain size through the post free. But every newspaper had to be stamped whether it was to go through the post or not. Thus the charge was a clear addition to the cost of the paper. The purchaser had to pay, say, two-pence for a pennyworth of news, and the State took half the money. It was a heavy toll, and of course it made large circulations impossible.

With the abolition of the paper duty there was a chance that the *Morning Star* might be profitable, and I believe it was profitable in two or three years. But it had a disease that was fatal. Perhaps I should say it had a complication of disorders. First there was the ill-omened union with the *Dial* proprietary. There was frequent, almost constant, friction. The policy of the paper, its news—every department—was complained of by the *Dial* directors, who could show to their shareholders neither adequate profit nor such proofs of righteousness in a newspaper as they had promised. Perhaps there were not many shareholders who complained, though there may have been some. But the Reverend Directors were hurt in a tender place. They said that their “consciences” would not permit them to sanction such a newspaper as the *Star* was made. With them it was the application of what has since come to be spoken of as the “Nonconformist conscience” to journalism. No doubt they were greatly moved. They had given assurances that the righteousness they approved was compatible with newspaper prosperity.

They had foretold Puritanism in print accompanied by dividends in cash. They had got neither the one nor the other.

I do not want to be misunderstood. The *Star* was a well-conducted newspaper. It taught what it believed to be the truth. It countenanced no immorality; it preached none. But it sought to give the news of the day, including the sporting news; and the Reverend Directors could not stomach this, when there were no dividends. Perhaps their argument was not altogether unsound. On the part of the management of the paper it was urged that not to give the news, including sporting news, would be to deprive the paper of all chance of profit, and it could not do the good it was doing in other directions if it lost money. In short, the argument so far was that the pill of good teaching should be sugared with the iniquity of horse-racing news. The answer of the Reverend Directors was in effect—"If you sold more pills because of the sugaring, something might be said for your argument. But you don't. You give almost as much sugar as pill; yet the returns are nothing. You have not even the comfort of profit to solace you in the sin." All this was true; though as a matter of morality it might be questioned.

The truth was that practically there was no head to the paper after Mr. Lucas died. The management had fallen into the hands of Mr. Alfred Hutchinson Dymond, who had been Mr. Lucas's

assistant in that department. He was a capable man—more capable perhaps under another than as himself the head. But I believe he was utterly discouraged by his difficulties with the directors. He could not open out new fields because of those difficulties, and he seemed to become content to let everything in connection with the paper move on old lines. All the time other penny dailies were pushing forward, and of course the *Star* was left behind. I verily believe that if it had been managed with spirit it would have taken a first place among the metropolitan newspapers. As it was, there was steady loss of blood.

If I remember aright, it was before Mr. Lucas died that an effort was made to give the *Morning Star* an impulse by the introduction of a new feature. This was the publication on every Monday morning of a column of gossip about society and literature and things in general. I do not remember who started the idea, but it was acted upon, and Mr. Edmund Yates, then in the Post Office, and winning, outside his official work, an increasing literary reputation, was invited to write the gossip, and consented. This weekly article was headed "The Flaneur." It was well done. Yates could not have done a thing of the kind badly. He was of Bohemia. He knew everybody. He heard everything. Thus he made his weekly article light, bright, gossipy, and cynical. I have sometimes thought that he may have found in it the root idea of the *World*, which he founded subsequently,

or helped to found, and which made him a rich man. After a time increasing engagements compelled Yates to give up "The Flaneur." It had been successful, and the desirableness of keeping it up was admitted. Who was to succeed Yates? Eventually it was put into the hands of Mr. Hain Friswell. He had written some books, the very names of which are now forgotten. He was a dull dog, who wrote without much regard for grammar. That might have been pardoned if the quality of his writing had been good. It was rubbish. Compared with the writing of Yates it was as Zoedone to Heidsieck. Indeed there was more effervescence in Zoedone than in his productions. One thing he did better than Yates—his handwriting was good. Yates wrote detestably: Friswell wrote like print. The printers said prayers backward for Yates: they counted Friswell among the angelic host. It may be suggested with much confidence that the reading public took an opposite view—they put Friswell below, and Yates high above.

Another effort to galvanise the property of the *Star* into prosperous life was made in connection with the *Evening Star*. A series of essays and short stories was begun in it under the title of "Readings by Starlight." Some really capital papers were written for this column; and I strongly suspect that certain features of present-day London journalism had their origin or suggestion in these "Readings." One discovery was made as soon as they were begun; it was that there need be no fear



as to want of material. There were plenty of young fellows who thought they could write stories or essays, and experience showed that they were not mistaken. To my thinking, the most original of them was Richard Whiteing. There was a strong vein of humour in him. What he wrote showed that he saw the seamy side of society, and could laugh at it and pity it. No man in my time has ever given so much promise of originality and literary talent as Richard Whiteing gave then. Why that promise has not been fulfilled I cannot say. Whiteing subsequently wrote a book—he may have written more than one; but if he has done so, they have not come my way. If I remember rightly, in that book he had a socialistic Utopia, or something of the kind. Possibly his undoubted genius may have been swamped in a socialistic bog, as the genius of other men has been swamped. Anyway, I lost sight of Whiteing for many years, until recently I heard by chance that he was engaged in journalism.

Another of the contributors to the "Readings by Starlight" was Archibald Forbes. He had not then become a war correspondent. He had not done much writing. But he showed that he could write, and write well. Still another of the writers was Mr. George Manville Fenn, who produced short stories. He has written long novels since then. Justin M'Carthy wrote some of the articles, and there were other writers whose names I do not recall. Their efforts were vain. The *Evening Star* could not be galvanised into prosperous life by "Readings," clever

as most of them were. The evil was too deep-rooted. Nothing but a new birth could save the *Stars*. They were still bright for those who saw them; but comparatively few did see them. There was no harmony in the management: there was no active head to the paper, though M'Carthy was recognised as the Editor. But he was thinking of other fields of work, and he could have little heart in what he was doing.

It was at this time—early in 1868—that the opportunity came for me. The suggestion was made from Edinburgh that I should become assistant to Mr. Alexander Russel, Editor of the *Scotsman*. It was what I wished. The offer made to me was accepted, and my connection with the *Star* was severed.

There was much that was painful in the severance of what had become old and dear ties. Some of my earlier colleagues of whom I have spoken were dead. But, as I have just said, Justin M'Carthy remained, and Chesson; and we had been joined by Mr., now Sir E. R. Russell, Mr. John Gorrie, and others. Never were better comrades than these. Rarely could be found abler men, taking them all round. I think that in his capacity to produce good work, Russell is one of the ablest newspaper men I have ever known. John Gorrie had been an advocate in Edinburgh. He had unwisely neglected his profession to dabble in municipal and imperial politics. He had spent his money on a newspaper which failed. He was known to Mr. Bright through Mr.

Duncan M'Laren, on whose side he had been in municipal and other matters ; and Mr. Bright introduced him to the *Star*. If he could have subordinated secondary considerations to those of first importance, he would have been a successful man. Being what he was, he seemed to be doomed to eventual failure. Through Mr. Bright's influence he was appointed Attorney-General of Mauritius. In a short time he was promoted to a puisne judgeship there. Then he was promoted to be Chief-Justice of Fiji, where he did splendid work in connection with the settlement of the land question. Afterwards he went as Chief-Justice to Trinidad, and was subsequently removed to another post in the West Indies. There some dispute arose ; a commission of inquiry was ordered, and I believe it reported against Gorrie, who had long before been made Sir John Gorrie. He came home to defend himself, and died soon after he landed. I had a great liking for him. There were not many questions on which we agreed ; but he was a gentleman, and differed from you in the spirit of a gentleman. The last time I saw him he was home from the West Indies on furlough. He had earned the right to retire, and he thought that he might be put upon the Scottish Bench. I did not think so, and told him what I thought. Subsequently he was ready to become a candidate for the St. Andrews Burghs. It was his great desire to get into Parliament. But in the last letter I had from him he told me that the people of the Island where he was wished him to remain with

them for some time longer, and in their interest he gave up hopes of Parliament for the time. The melancholy end of it all I have told.

About the time when I was leaving the *Star*, M'Carthy resolved to leave it. The paper, I believe, got rid of the *Dial* incubus and became absolutely the property of Mr. Rawson of Manchester, whose name has been previously mentioned. It was under him that Mr. John Morley was induced to become Editor of the paper, only to see it extinguished as a separate entity some three months afterwards.



## CHAPTER XIV

The *Scotsman*—Its history as a feature of British journalism—Its foundation—Tory domination of the time—A subservient Press—The ideas and promises of the founders—Charles M'Laren—William Ritchie—John Ritchie—The prospectus—Early days and difficulties—Progress of the paper in size, in circulation, and in advertisements—The penny.

IN an earlier chapter I have mentioned the fact that I was the first correspondent of the *Scotsman* in London in connection with "special wire" work. There will be more to tell on that matter presently. It is only recalled here because it enables me to say that, in 1868 when I came to Edinburgh, the *Scotsman* was well known to me. In truth it had been known to me long years before any thought of association with it arose. In Hull I had read it: in London it had been regarded by me as the best index of Scottish political feeling, and as the best newspaper that came to hand. It was not altogether as a novice in its affairs that I joined it in Edinburgh. At that time it was forging ahead, and giving abundant proofs of the vitality and force that directed some newspapers out of London. I do not think it would be possible to find better evidence that the history of London journalism alone is not in any sense a history of

British journalism, than is to be found in the story of the *Scotsman*. It was founded as a political and literary newspaper : it has never changed its political character ; it has ever kept literature in the forefront. But it has done far more ; and I propose to show some of the things it has done. If I, who have been so long its child and its guide, feel proud of it, who can wonder ?

The *Scotsman* was founded in January 1817. Its first number appeared on the 25th of that month. It had been planned some months before, to secure a hearing for protests against the heavy oppression of Toryism, which then bore even more heavily on Scotland than on England. There were newspapers, but they dare not call their souls their own. Perhaps it is a large assumption to speak of souls in connection with them. They had bodies which were usually prostrate at the feet of those who carried on the policy and the iron rule of the first Lord Melville. Not a spark of independence ever glimmered for a moment in their pages. The Tories of that day were not bad fellows. It is told of them by a competent authority that they were very good fellows socially. How could it be otherwise when they numbered among them Walter Scott, and many others who, without his genius, emulated his good fellowship ? It was their Toryism that was hard and unbending. It was their theory of government that made them oppressors. The earth might be the Lord's, but the fulness thereof, and especially the offices thereof, were for those who already

possessed good things and held to Toryism. It was in the political sphere what Roman Catholicism is in the spiritual sphere : it was the truth, and nobody must be allowed to question it.

Of course corruption followed in the train of Toryism—became part of it indeed. There is room for the exercise of charity here. Probably those who enjoyed the fruits of corruption never thought it wrong. They knew of no moral law that prohibited Toryism from getting what it could, wherever getting was possible. Therefore they took what they could, and were resolute in their prosecution and persecution of anybody and everybody who did not admit that Toryism was a divine revelation, and that, being the child of Heaven, it ought to have all the good things of Earth. In a leading article in the *Scotsman* in 1867, in celebration of its jubilee, it was written—“The men of the present day are not able even to imagine the things of the former day. A sordid, servile, and self-seeking Toryism . . . was everywhere predominant, insolent and merciless.” To have said less would have been to palter with the truth.

Previous to 1817 there was practically no right of public meeting in Scotland for those who were not of the ruling party. If at any time two or three were gathered together to protest against misgovernment, what they said was not reported, and they were as often as not prosecuted. The Tory idea of the way to keep political rights and political knowledge from the people was to silence speakers, or to

suppress what they said. The newspapers of course were Tory. They reported nothing that had not the hall-mark of Toryism upon it. In short, a black cloud of political oppression brooded over the country, and threatened to draw every atom of true manliness out of the people. It was at this point that the *Scotsman* came into existence. The Tories, as we shall see, hated it, but they professed to despise it and to speak of it with the contempt that strong men feel for vicious weaklings. It was but a feeble light at first; but it was strong enough to break through the Tory clouds. It grew and grew; and before many years were over, the clouds had disappeared, and men were revelling in light and freedom.

Not one of those who founded the *Scotsman* could have dreamed of the great work it would do in the political sphere. The very idea of starting the newspaper was not generated by any direct act of political oppression. In August or September 1816, Mr. William Ritchie, a Solicitor of the Supreme Courts, practising in Edinburgh, had been requested by friends and clients to draw up a statement in regard to the mismanagement of the Royal Infirmary. He complied. Of the facts there could be no doubt. They were set out with fairness and moderation, but with perfect plainness. The conductors of the local newspapers were asked to publish the document. They refused. Did not the statement reflect upon some of the Tories of the day? and were such reflections likely to be tolerated? What was the mismanagement of the Royal Infirmary compared

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with the evil of exposure of the mismanagers? I have heard people argue in this fashion even in these later days—people who are not Tories, at least who say they are not, but make loud professions of Liberalism.

The attempt to burke the statement seems to have been too much for Mr. Charles M'Laren. He was a friend of Mr. Ritchie's, whose tastes were in many respects akin to his own. At the time, he was engaged in the Customs department of the Public Service. He was about 33 or 34 years of age, and a man whose reading, which had been extensive, and whose thinking, which had been vigorous, had made him an ardent believer in the principles of constitutional liberty. He resented the hurtful domination of Toryism : he believed in well-ordered liberty. He had special tastes—as for mechanics, geology, and other branches of science. He was a clear thinker, and, as he was to prove, a clear and vigorous writer. His humour was not demonstrative. He it was who, years later, in conversation with Mr. J. R. Findlay, confessed that he joked with difficulty. Cockney humourists have caught up the saying, have tortured it in various ways, including the misspelling of words in what they suppose is the Scottish fashion. And they are for ever bandying it about as if it were the expression of a national peculiarity. They are indebted for it to Mr. Charles M'Laren. If he was not given to joking himself, he has furnished many poor fellows since his time with a joke that, after their fashion, they mostly contrive to spoil.

Mr. M'Laren, disgusted with the treatment of Mr. William Ritchie's statement as to the Royal Infirmary, conceived the idea of establishing a journal that would have the courage to be free. He talked the matter over at first with a Mr. John Robertson, a bookseller; but soon Mr. William Ritchie was taken into council, and, as Mr. M'Laren said later, William Ritchie it was who, "after a little reflection, entered into it warmly." He converted the idea into practical action. "He assisted in forming the plan, *suggested the title*, drew up the prospectus, and by his exertions and personal influence contributed more than any other individual to establish the paper." If William Ritchie had done nothing more than invent the title of the paper, he would have done his full share. For, surely, never was title of a newspaper more happily chosen! Sometimes I have wondered what was the train of thought in William Ritchie's mind that led up to the *Scotsman*. We know that the times were out of joint for Liberal-minded people. We know there was intolerable domination by the Toryism of the time. We know that wrongs could not be righted, and that grievances could not get a hearing or redress. We know that Scotsmen never have borne wrongs meekly. William Ritchie was a Scot in the truest sense—courageous, thoughtful, intolerant of wrong-doing. His sense of justice and right must have been revolted by what he saw around him, and by what he experienced. Did he recall what Burns had written—"Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled"? Did he find his suggestion

there in that magnificent war-song of a race against tyranny and oppression? The speculation is perhaps of little use. The fact remains that William Ritchie found the name of the *Scotsman*, and it was destined to be a chief instrument in driving away the hateful Tory domination, and in giving to Scotsmen a vehicle for the exposure of wrongs or grievances and the free discussion of public questions.

So far we have the idea of the paper and its title. It had to be carried further: the idea realised, the title printed. Mr. M'Laren, Mr. William Ritchie, and Mr. John Robertson could not do all that was required. Therefore they took counsel with others that they might get the necessary capital. First Mr. William Ritchie's elder brother, Mr. John Ritchie, was approached. He was a draper who had a shop in the then fashionable thoroughfare of Nicolson Street, in Edinburgh. He was a quiet, thoughtful man with excellent business knowledge and experience. He shared the political views of his brother. I often met him in 1868-69, shortly before he died. Then, stricken with many years and feeble with decaying strength, he was still shrewd and business-like in his conversation. It was not difficult to conceive what he must have been fifty years before, when he was in his prime. He joined his brother, Mr. M'Laren, and Mr. Robertson. Three other recruits were obtained—Mr. James M'Donald, silk merchant; Mr. A. Abernethy, printer; and Mr. J. M'Diarmid, who, then connected with the Commercial Bank, subsequently became

editor of the *Dumfries Courier*. These were the projectors and original proprietors of the *Scotsman*. How and why they came together have been described.

On the 30th of November 1816 the prospectus of the new journal was issued. A more moderately toned document of the kind was never put before the world. The age of limited liability companies had not then arrived. True, there had been painful experience in company-making in Scotland and in France and elsewhere. But the professional "promoter" had not come into existence, and prospectus writing had not become one of the fine arts. Thus there was no flourish of fine words in the announcement made by the earnest, honest, straightforward men whose names have been set forth. They said what they meant and what they believed, and they said no more. There was no railing in the prospectus; the projectors simply declared their belief that "nothing of a very spirited or liberal nature can find its way through the Edinburgh daily or weekly press; that many political matters and transactions in Scotland are thus never generally known; and that the conductors of the Edinburgh press act editorially as if they dreaded nothing so much as the idea of being thought independent."

This was in the nature of preamble. What followed was an announcement of the intention to publish the first number of a paper to be called the *Scotsman* in the first week of the next January. After this announcement came the assurance that



the new paper would be political, literary, and honest in the news it published. "The conductors," said the prospectus, "do not mean to confine their journal to the discussion of politics. They will endeavour also, by making it a reflector of morals and literature, to multiply the sources of rational amusement." They "pledge themselves for impartiality, firmness, and independence." Finally there was a declaration of political principle. "The Editor and his immediate Associates are lovers of their country. . . . They wish to preserve constitutional liberty equally from the encroachments of power and the destructions of anarchy. At present, they conceive, there are dangers to be apprehended from both ; for an unfortunate estrangement, they fear, has taken place between the people and those who hold office over them." Holding these views, the projectors looked for improvement to a firm application of the principles of constitutional government as formulated in the treatises of Burke and Sir James Mackintosh.

It may be doubted whether a more modest, a more temperate, or a firmer and clearer statement of objects and principles was ever made in the prospectus of a new journal. There were no impossible promises ; there was no "fine" writing. In clear, terse, vigorous English, principles were affirmed. It is indubitable that the promises and vows thus made in the name of the infant paper have been kept in both letter and spirit. Soon after it appeared it had made its mark. Mr. M'Laren

had a resolute purpose, a clear grasp of principles, and a gift of clear exposition. He laid the foundation of the paper's character; he justified its existence. Lord Cockburn spoke of the *Scotsman* as "the first Scotch newspaper which combined independence with intelligence, and moderation with zeal." That was the general opinion, at least among those who were not of the dominant political sect. Liberals had got a mouthpiece; they could make themselves heard.

It must be said that many of those who in its early days sympathised with the *Scotsman* and rejoiced in its appearance week by week were careful not to make any outward and visible manifestations of their satisfaction. To have been known as a reader of the paper would have been fatal to the business of some of them. For the ban of the "authorities" was on the new venture, and remained on it until changed times brought other "authorities" who had some belief in freedom. The administration of the old order could not love a journal that preached doctrines which they had declared to be Anathema! Contact with it was the touching of pitch in their eyes. Reading it was moral degradation. Its doctrines led to anarchy—the subversion of all good government; and of course the government of that day was good in all respects! Therefore it was that men hid the fact that they read the *Scotsman*. It has been told, and is true, that "respectable" men who were Liberal in sentiment got their clerks to subscribe to the paper that it

might be smuggled into their own houses ; the clerks had nothing to lose, the masters had.

A curious piece of evidence as to the conditions under which the paper was published is found in an agreement among the proprietors, signed at a meeting some ten days after the first number had appeared. As part of the first head of agreement it was written :

"As several literary gentlemen are to take an interest in supporting the *Scotsman* who do not wish their names to be generally known, even among the Proprietors, and as it is thus requisite, with the view of ensuring success by able literary contributions, to vest the Editorship ostensibly in such of the subscribers as have some connection with, and enjoy the confidence of those literary friends, the Editorship of the *Scotsman* is hereby vested in" Mr. Charles M'Laren, Mr. John M'Diarmid, and Mr. W. Ritchie.

Absolute power was given to these gentlemen. No shares could be held without their leave. They were subsequently spoken of as "ostensible Editors," the reason being that Mr. Charles M'Laren was the real practical working Editor. The others were most useful for the purpose mentioned in the agreement. It is needless to enlarge upon the evidence afforded by the arrangement of the terrorism exercised to prevent the new paper from getting a hearing.

Still it did make way. The projectors had only reckoned on 300 subscribers to make it pay. They were finely indifferent to advertisements. Announcements of books would be accepted ; but nothing else. Needless to say, this arrangement did not last long. The paper grew in circulation, and business people found courage to advertise in it, while the proprietors

became less strict in drawing the line at literary announcements. There are few newspapers in existence of which it can be said that they began to prosper with their first number. This can be said of the *Scotsman*. No doubt it had its troubles; but it always advanced. It began with a weekly sheet of eight small pages of three columns each, in all equal to about twelve columns of the paper at present. In 1823 it was published twice a week, still in its original form. At the beginning of 1831 the paper was enlarged. In 1855, on the 30th of June, when the impressed stamp was removed, the first daily issue appeared, the twice a week publication still continuing. More than forty years have passed since then. The small daily has become a great sheet. From a weekly issue of twelve columns it has grown to a daily issue of never less than 64 columns and often of 128. Not only has the first restriction on advertisements not been maintained, but there has been marvellous growth in that department. The original idea was that the advertisements were never to exceed two columns in length in any number. Now they are often close upon 80 columns, and have been over 86 columns, in a single issue.

When the *Scotsman* was first published the price of it was 10d., of which 4d. was required for the Government stamp. Subsequently, in 1823, the price was lowered to 7d., of which 4d. was for the stamp. In 1836 there was a further reduction of the stamp duty to 1d. and the price of the paper



became 4d., and it was afterwards increased to 4½d. In 1855 the impressed stamp was removed, or at least was made permissive for postal purposes, and the price of the paper fell to 1d. Roundly speaking, it is now ten times as large as it was in 1817, and it is sold for a tenth of the price.

How all this expansion has come—the methods that have been adopted to make it possible—is a story, or a series of stories, eminently worth telling.

## CHAPTER XV

Editor *v.* Business Manager—The management of the *Scotsman*—  
Romance in business—Growth of circulation of the paper—  
Conservatism of the Scots—How to enlarge the circulation—  
The causes of restriction—Railway carriage and middlemen  
—A great alteration—The *Caledonian Mercury*—A social  
revolution.

No one will believe that the growth of the *Scotsman* which is described in the last chapter could have been achieved if there had not been strong hands at the helm in earlier days. There were, in truth, strong hands and strong heads available. I do not believe that the prosperity and usefulness of a newspaper depend solely, or even mainly, upon the Editor. Perhaps this is heresy: be it so; I am prepared to defend it. An Editor who is stupid or deficient in tact can unmake a paper in the sense of destroying its prosperity; an Editor who is wise and tactful cannot by his own exertions make a paper prosperous. If there be not energy and wisdom in the business management of a newspaper, vain will be the efforts of the Editor. What is the use of preparing a commodity for sale if you cannot get it to the knowledge of the public? No matter how good it may be, no matter how much

the public would enjoy it if they had the opportunity, if it be not within their reach it might as well never have been made.

There was careful management of the business of the *Scotsman* in its early days. I am free to say there has been most able and enlightened management of its affairs in later years. The result is—prosperity, such as the projectors and first producers of the paper could never have dreamed of.

It will not be difficult to bring forward proof of the accuracy of the general propositions just made. If romance ever could be associated with a newspaper—and I am far from saying it cannot—then the story of the growth of the *Scotsman* in one department alone, and the methods by which that growth was brought about, might be described as romantic. In one way it was certainly revolutionary. It has been said that revolutions are rarely beneficial to those who make them. That may be so; but the possibility of exceptions is admitted, and the management of the *Scotsman* provides one of them.

It has already been told that the originators of the paper were modest in their expectations. They had counted the cost of producing a news sheet, and they found that if they could sell 300 copies they would not be losers. It is not to be supposed that they were indifferent to possible profit, but they did not see where it was to come from, and, plainly, they did not care. They wanted to produce light in politically dark places, and it may be that the

idea involved in Mr. Robert Lowe's motto for his match tax came into their mind—*Ex luce lucellum*. Be this as it may, it is certain that no expectations of the beginning could equal the realisation of later years. From the first the circulation of the paper exceeded the calculations. It grew with almost every week. Practically no provision had been made at the beginning for the payment of an Editor. The profits soon made such remuneration possible.

At least ten years may be passed over in this story—the ten years from 1817 to 1827—as being comparatively uneventful in the way of increased circulation of the *Scotsman*. It had grown all it could grow in the circumstances. There were no railways: communication between Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland was certainly slow and often difficult. The price of the paper was comparatively high. Yet the circulation had steadily increased till it stood at about 1700 for each publication. That was a great circulation for those days. But it soon grew, though still slowly. Twenty-eight years later, in 1855, the circulation had risen to about 3400 a day. The Crimean War was raging then, and it created a demand for newspapers—wars always do, though they bring little or no profit, because of the cost of obtaining the news. Special war correspondents are not as inexpensive as the first Editor of the *Scotsman*. That Crimean War, by the bye, saw the commencement of the reign of the “special war correspondent.” William Russell,



Nicholas Woods, and others whose names I do not now recall showed the way to Archibald Forbes, Beatty Kingston, and a host of others.

Let me get back to the *Scotsman* in 1855. That was the year in which it became a daily paper. That was the year also in which its price was reduced to a penny. The lower price and the Russian War increased the sale of the paper, which went up from 3400 to about 6000 per day. This was too much of growth for the time; at least that seems to have been the impression. If it was, a remedy for the supposed evil was soon forthcoming. The Russian War ended and the circulation fell to about 4000 per day.

Some wise man has said in recent times that the Scots are the most conservative people in the world, with the possible exception of the Chinese. This wise man put a great truth in an exaggerated form. The Scottish people are conservative, though their conservatism may be breaking down a little in these days. They are conservative in their customs, in their institutions, in the Radicalism of their politics. The *Scotsman* had a curious illustration of this conservatism when it became a daily paper. Old staunch subscribers who had not strongly disapproved the change from a publication once a week to a publication twice a week, would have nothing to do with the daily issue. Why should they be driven at such a rate? Why should they be troubled every day with the news of the world? Twice a week was often enough for

political lessons and world history. Therefore these Conservatives, who were staunch Liberals and had to a man taken part in the battle for political freedom, would not touch the daily *Scotsman*.

The views of these old subscribers were not shared by the public generally. Or, to put it another way, there were many people in the country who were not so conservative as the old subscribers. Newspapers had been rare luxuries to thousands who now found the *Scotsman* within comparatively easy reach. By 1859 the average sale of the paper had become 10,000 per day ; in 1862 it was 15,000 ; and it grew till in 1864 it had become 17,000 per day. Probably there were not many daily papers out of London that had achieved so large a circulation. But the Business Head of the paper was resolved that it should be larger, and he had thought out a method by which the desired end could be or might be attained. This method it was that virtually and indeed actually revolutionised the distribution of newspapers in Scotland, and later in England. It is a noteworthy fact that England, in newspaper matters as in other affairs, has followed Scotland. In regard to business details and general effectiveness, what the *Scotsman* adopted to-day, all English and Scottish journalism adopted on the morrow.

In 1865, the unpleasant fact that stared the management in the face was that the circulation of the paper was mainly confined to Edinburgh and its immediate neighbourhood. What were the

causes of this, and how could they be removed? That was the problem to be solved.

It was not difficult to discover the causes of limitation. They were to be found in the cost of getting the newspaper to purchasers at a distance ; and secondly, in the then only available method of general distribution through wholesale newsvendors. As to the cost—a paper could only reach a distant part of the country as a railway parcel, or through the post. If it went through the post the charge was a penny per copy. In other words, the price of the paper was doubled to the subscriber. If it went by railway parcel—well, it could not go that way in small numbers ; the cost was prohibitive.

Nothing was more certain than that in all parts of the country there were people who would read the paper, and who desired to read it, if they could get it. In the old days, with the impressed stamp, newspapers were posted again and again. The first purchaser read his paper, sent it on to a second, who sent it on to a third ; where the process ended nobody could say. Perhaps it was this re-posting and passing from hand to hand that brought the word “circulation” into use in connection with the number issued of a newspaper. I make the curious in such matters a present of the suggestion. The last thing any newspaper desires is “circulation” in the sense in which the word came to be used. Just as the watchword of some politicians is “One man, one vote,” so the cry of the newspaper man is “One man, as many newspapers as he can get, but at least

one to himself." This is not so epigrammatic as the politician's shibboleth, but it is sound common sense.

Anyway, the Business Head of the *Scotsman* in 1865 sought to enable every reader who desired a copy of the paper to get one. He began with the railways. There were more railway companies then than now, and each company exacted its own rate for the carriage of a parcel, however light. Thus the cost of carriage became prohibitive, so far as small towns and large villages were concerned. If the difficulty could be removed or lessened, agencies for the sale of the paper could be opened all over the country where no such agencies then existed, or could exist. Here it was that the second obstacle to be overcome was encountered.

There prevailed in Edinburgh, as in other large towns, a system of wholesale news vending. The few vendors who carried on the business in Edinburgh were, or had been, mainly booksellers. In London they had long been simply wholesale newsagents. For early days the system had its advantages: it may have some advantages now; but it means strangulation of enterprising newspapers. The newsagent in town collects the newspapers he requires. There may be half-a-dozen or more of them all competing with each other. He then makes them into parcels for country agents—each parcel containing some of all the different papers in accordance with the order of the agent to whom they are to be sent. It is obvious that by this



course the poorest and least enterprising of the papers gets an advantage partly at the expense of the more enterprising. If in no other way, it gets an advantage in the cost of the carriage on the parcel. No newsagent in the country could pay the carriage on the small parcel that would alone be required for the poor paper; but when it got tacked on to the skirts of the strong paper it could be ordered and carried.

Under the wholesale newsagent system, therefore, the enterprise of a newspaper which might distinguish it above other papers was to a large extent nullified. The system levelled down the strong and gave factitious aid to the weak. Obviously, if it could be dispensed with—if there could be direct connection between the producer and the consumer, the *Scotsman* would have better opportunities of being known and appreciated. The problem in its general application to all articles of use has come down to us to this day. In all directions there is a growing or full-grown desire to get rid of the middleman. The desire can never be fully realised—though as to some things the parcel-post may help to that end. There must be distributive agencies at points more or less remote from the productive centre. This was fully understood by the Business Head of the *Scotsman* in 1865. His object was to increase the distributive agencies—to plant them in every town and large village in the country, and to bring them into direct connection with the office in Edinburgh. If the railways could be induced to

help him, the middleman could be dispensed with, a network of agencies could be created, and the *Scotsman* must be more widely read.

Early in 1865 proposals were made to all the railway companies in Scotland with a view to carrying out the project. The proposal made was that parcels of the *Scotsman* might be carried by contract all over the railway systems. The cost of the carriage was to be paid by the proprietors of the paper. They were prepared to guarantee to the railway companies a much greater revenue from the carriage of the *Scotsman* alone than they had hitherto earned from the carriage of all the newspapers put together. Besides, if the other papers continued, they would still have to send parcels to the country either directly from their own office, or through the middlemen. It is not wonderful that the railway companies agreed to the proposed arrangement. They were clear gainers by it. Before long the system was adopted all over the country, and spread to the provincial centres in England. The *Scotsman* had pointed out the way to a change which was to have the effect of enormously increasing the circulation of most newspapers.

The effect upon the *Scotsman* itself was strongly marked in a great growth of the demand for the paper. It could not have been otherwise, unless the paper had been stupid and unreadable, which assuredly it was not. There was little difficulty in getting agents for the sale of the paper in remote places when it was known that the cost of

carriage of parcels would be paid by the proprietors, and each agent would as to terms be placed on the same footing as agents in town. It was not then, and it is not now the habit of traders or any one in country districts or in towns to despise small profits. What might be made from the sale of the *Scotsman* would add materially to the comfort of the seller. There was no grudging application of the new system. The object of the deviser of it was to get the paper before the public. He had a well-grounded confidence that if it could be brought within reach of possible readers, they would become readers in fact. He believed that if he could let the *Scotsman* be tasted, so to speak, the desire for it would spread and increase. Thus it was no part of his stipulation with the agents in the country that they should order as many papers as would cover the cost of the carriage. Wherever three or four were ordered, they were sent free. They were seed sown in notoriously good ground, and they bore fruit in due season.

Of course there was a great outcry from different quarters. There always is an outcry when any change is made. In this case the cry came mainly from the smaller papers. I was not in Edinburgh at the time, but I was a fairly diligent reader of the Scottish newspapers, and I remember the lament of the *Caledonian Mercury*, then nearly at its last gasp. "We have no desire for a change in regard to country agents," was its cry in effect, and very nearly in so many words. "Restless people are

trying to force on a change. We have no sympathy with it. But if any agent in the country would like to have a special parcel of the *Mercury* on the new plan he can have it." Alas! it may be feared few agents in the country wanted such a special parcel. The enterprise of the "restless people" was too much for the *Mercury*. It was an old—a very old paper. It had become strongly Radical in its later years. Yet it illustrated a statement I have made elsewhere, that the Scot is conservative. The *Mercury* was all for pulling down this institution and that: it was quite ready to take the constitution to pieces without much regard as to how it was to be put together again. But a proposal to get rid of the middleman in the distribution of newspapers was an intolerable offence!

Not much heed was paid by the *Scotsman* to the railings and groanings of the other papers. It had entered upon a course which was to be travelled with steady resolution. The effect was marvellous. All over the country, agents had been appointed after personal acquaintance with them. As they prospered, others presented themselves. In the course of a few months the list of country agents had grown from 80 to upwards of 1000. For a long time the enterprise that broke this new ground was not emulated, and the *Scotsman* had much of the field to itself. Daily the circulation increased. In February 1865 it had been 17,000 per day. In July 1866 it had reached 27,000 per day. In 1870 it had grown to 30,000 per day. Three years later it was



40,000; and in 1877 it had grown to 50,000. That is to say, in twelve years the circulation had been trebled. It is now much larger than in 1877.

How much of the growth is to be attributed to the Editors of the paper and how much to the Business Manager, may be estimated by every one for himself. My feeling is that while the Editors planted and watered, the Business Manager gave the increase or made it possible. He did far more. He effected a change which has revolutionised newspaper distribution all over the United Kingdom. The old order of middlemen has almost entirely disappeared out of London. The railway companies are the carriers, not for those middlemen, but for the producer and the consumer. Here is a pretty problem for the consideration of the social philosopher—sociologist, I believe he calls himself. There is an enormous growth of newspaper reading in the country. There is a decrease of crime in proportion to the population. There is greater comfort in most homes. In short, Society is better in most ways than it was. Will the sociologist admit that the improvement is in large measure due to increase in newspaper reading? I have not a doubt on the subject myself, and I do not believe any one else can have who looks at all the conditions. If, then, the sociologist should agree with me, what will he say of the man who did so much to make the extension of newspaper reading possible? Everybody knows about the great virtue of him who has made two blades of corn to grow where only one

grew before. What is to be said of him who has enabled a thousand newspapers to be read where not ten were read before? In sober earnest, that is what the Business Head of the *Scotsman* did when he revolutionised the methods of getting newspapers to readers. The abolition of the paper duty had made the production of newspapers less costly, but it had not brought them nearer to great masses of the people in the country. That was brought about by the *Scotsman*.

## CHAPTER XVI

Restlessness in effort—Necessary in newspapers—News for the *Scotsman*—Stirring up the Telegraph Companies—Their inertness—Their charges—An impeachment of them—A throttling band—Some newspapers satisfied—Meetings of newspaper men—Telegraph managers brought to bay—Reduction of charges—More suggestions—The “Special Wire” offered—The “Malignant Being”—Adoption of special wires—Enormous growth of telegraphing.

SOME men never can be at rest so long as they can find anything to do. Where the restlessness is properly directed—where it is under good control, it is an unmingled blessing. The inert dislike it. Even men who are not usually inert are disturbed by it now and then. “You have waked me too soon, let me slumber again,” is their complaint, as one of the gifted poets of the order of Dr. Watts has told us is the complaint of the sluggard. No one who has seated himself in a snug chair after some work, and has stretched himself out in luxurious restfulness, cares to be told that he must get upon his feet and take fresh work in hand.

Those who have to manage newspapers must be restless. They must go from one effort to another. The completion of one task must be the commence-

ment of the next. There are instances in the history of British journalism where this has not been remembered, and flourishing newspapers, built up with energy and perseverance, have become wrecks. It will not do to assume that what was good enough for yesterday is good enough for to-day. Not merely do the tastes of the reading public vary, but every day something new, or something old in a new form, is being developed. If the public tastes and the general development be not watched—nay, if they be not helped, decay will set in. Most certainly it is true of newspaper enterprise that to stand still is to go backward.

In 1865 no one was more thoroughly alive to this fact than the Business Head of the *Scotsman*. He had ranged over the whole of Scotland from John o' Groat's to Berwick and the Solway; he had corresponded with every railway company; he had made a close acquaintance with the time-tables of every company, and he had revolutionised newspaper distribution. The moment of success in this matter was the moment for beginning a new campaign which was to effect another revolution. In some of its aspects it was objected to by newspaper men who wanted to be allowed rest; but they had to bestir themselves.

The object of the new movement was to enable the *Scotsman* to publish more and later news than at that time was possible. Though the paper was, so far as local news was concerned, the paper of to-day, it was as to most other news the paper of



yesterday. All that railway parcels, the Post Office, and special expresses could do to remedy the evil was done ; but this was not enough. There were great possibilities in the use of the Electric Telegraph ; and it was in this direction that the new effort turned.

In a previous chapter I have hurriedly sketched the growth of newspaper telegraphing. I have now to tell of the first strong impulse given to it. From a short time after its foundation the Electric Telegraph Company had formed what, if I remember rightly, was called an "Intelligence Department." Under the direction of Mr. C. V. Boys this department gathered a few items of news, and in the Parliamentary session made up a sort of skeleton report of Parliamentary proceedings. Some market news, some Stock Exchange news, and Reuter's telegrams formed in addition the staple of what was provided. Rarely did the matter forwarded exceed a column in length. This was not enough for the requirements of a newspaper that desired to be abreast of the news of the day. There was great difficulty in supplementing it, for two reasons. First, the lines of the company did not extend to small towns and large villages. Second, the cost of telegraphing news was practically prohibitive. The first difficulty had been somewhat lessened when two rivals of the Electric Telegraph Company—the Magnetic Telegraph Company and the United Kingdom Telegraph Company—had been started. There had been hopes that the second difficulty would be lessened

by their competition. Those hopes were disappointed; the three companies before long agreed to combine against the public in respect of the charges made.

From time to time there had been complaints and more or less strenuous endeavour to get the telegraph tariff reduced, and to secure a better working arrangement with the companies. These had in no way been successful. The companies knew they had the field to themselves, and they acted on a principle which I have often seen adopted elsewhere and as to other things—the principle that it is better to do a little with a fair profit, even if you do it badly, than it is to do a good deal at lower price, even though it might result in a larger profit. The small business and the comparatively high profit are certainties. Who would rush into ventures that would double or treble the work and might lose the profit? Some trace of this is to be found in the advice so often given by the leaders of miners to “limit production.” Three days’ work a week at 4s. a day is worth more than five days’ work at 3s. 6d. a day! This was pretty much the sort of argument that prevailed with the telegraph companies in 1865.

On the 23rd of June of that year a Memorandum was issued by the Business Head of the *Scotsman* on the subject of the high rates and ineffective service of the companies. It tells the story of the grievances of newspapers with much clearness and vigour. It tells how a competition which at one

time existed between the Electric Telegraph Company and the Magnetic Telegraph Company for the supply of news had ceased, and the two coming together with the United Kingdom Company had in 1864 announced an advance of rates amounting generally to 33 per cent. There had been meetings of pressmen to complain of the charges; but all in vain: the terms had to be accepted. Then comes a paragraph of the Memorandum which, without making any excuse for doing so, I may quote in full. It describes the telegraphic situation and the consequent grievances of newspapers with so much intimate knowledge and so clearly, that no paraphrase of it could be so effective as the full text:—

“Since the increased charges were imposed,” says the Memorandum, “the supply of news sent by the Company, besides gradually becoming smaller in quantity, has been so inaccurate, and so late and irregular in delivery, as literally to disgust the conductors of newspapers with the entire service. No attempt has since been made to secure any united action in remedying their grievances” (that is, since the prices had been increased), “but the proprietors of the *Scotsman* have been endeavouring to supplement the ordinary supplies of news by special telegrams daily from their own reporters. Here again, they were met by the Electric Telegraph officials in a spirit of opposition and obstruction which is hardly credible. Press messages are declared by the manager to be most unprofitable to the Company, which does not, therefore, wish to encourage them. They interfere, it is urged, with ordinary messages during the day, and they are more inconvenient at night, as they require late clerks, gas-light, etc. The ordinary rate for messages from London to Edinburgh is one shilling for twenty words, and ten words of an address; and for each shilling thus received the Company’s clerk has to grant a receipt, and transmit thirty words of a message, which has to be delivered free of charge at the other

end. The proprietors of the *Scotsman* offered to use the Electric Telegraph Company's wires systematically to the extent of many hundred pounds a year if they would transmit their news messages at thirty words for a shilling (including address), being precisely the same terms, so far as the number of words to be transmitted is concerned, as are charged to the public; but this offer, made repeatedly and in various forms, was persistently declined by the Companies.<sup>1</sup> The night clerks' attendance and gas-lights being the objection made to night press work, an offer was made to lease one wire between London and Edinburgh for a few hours each night, the *Scotsman* to provide clerks, etc., and pay the entire working expense; but this proposal was also declined. In spite of these obstacles, frequent long private messages have been sent for the *Scotsman*, though no efforts are made to send them quickly, or to render the service in the least degree satisfactory. As an instance, it may be mentioned that, on one occasion, about a month ago, the *Scotsman* reporter in London gave in a Parliamentary report at the Electric Telegraph Company's offices a few minutes after midnight, and no part of it reached the *Scotsman* office till after 4 A.M., when the paper had been put to press; and the message had therefore to be thrown into the waste basket. A request was made that the money (some few pounds) should be returned. The Secretary sent a long apology for the delay, but took no notice of the request to return the money. He was reminded that this was what was asked, and not any apology; but no notice has been taken of the letter."

The Memorandum gives other illustrations of the negligence shown by the companies, and makes a curious statement which everybody who knows anything about newspaper work will easily understand.

"A few months ago," says the Memorandum, "the Electric Telegraph Company transferred, without notice to the newspapers, the work of transmitting their news to the Edinburgh

<sup>1</sup> A definite reason was given for the refusal. It was said that if the *Scotsman* were allowed to use the wires in the way proposed, the result would be that the *Caledonian Mercury* would be killed, and the Telegraph Company would lose a customer for its so-called news service!



papers. The clerks in the United Kingdom office (to which the transfer was made), having had no previous experience in this kind of work, made such havoc in what was sent that not one of the Stock Exchange quotations could be relied upon for a long time ; proper names were spelled in the most fantastic way ; and in the shipping news one could not distinguish the ship from the port or the port from the captain, the names of each being so incongruously mixed up. This state of matters is now somewhat improved ; but the arrangement is most objectionable, as so dividing the responsibility that it never can be ascertained where the blame of delay lies."

Here was a pitiful story. To the newspaper man of to-day, who has had no experience of those old times, it will be hard to understand. He has his messages delivered promptly. Perhaps he may think he is a sufferer because of the blunders of telegraph clerks, and in truth they are not even yet as perfect as they might be ; but they are paragons of perfection as compared with their predecessors in the time of the companies. Unquestionably the grievances set forth in the Memorandum from which I have quoted were very real. The telegraphs, which might have been and ought to have been the fostering parents of enterprise in news-seeking and getting, were converted into a throttling band upon all enterprise.

There were newspapers that were satisfied. If they could not telegraph they saved expense ! and the public got all it was necessary to give them ! Other men were wiser, and they were galled by the telegraphic restraints. Unquestionably the world was made better by their restlessness. Your suggestive-minded man, if his suggestiveness be

backed by action, is a thorn in the side of the supreme and lethargic being. It has always been so, and will be to the end of the chapter. Thus when the Memorandum about telegraphic news went from the office of the *Scotsman* in June 1865, there were some newspaper men who used the favourite question of Lord Melbourne, and asked, "Why can't you let the matter alone?" It need not be doubted that there would have been more if the full extent of the designs of the writer of that Memorandum had been realised. As it was, his statement was taken as pointing towards a reduction of the charges made by the telegraph companies for what was facetiously called their "news supply." The underlying intention to use the telegraphs in new directions as much as possible was not generally recognised. No doubt some of the managers of leading papers did recognise it, and shared in the desire for greater telegraphic expansion. Anyway, the effect of the Memorandum was to stir up a fresh agitation, and to worry the managers of the telegraph companies to some purpose.

Meetings of newspaper managers and proprietors were held. There was a general interchange of views, and the result was the formation of a sort of Bond, calling itself the "Press Association." It must not be confounded with the "Press Association" of to-day, which was founded at a later period and for another purpose. The Press Association of 1865 was formed to bring combined pressure

to bear upon the telegraph companies. Those companies could play with individual complainers. All the arts of obstructive officialism could be used in such cases. Against an Association which by its existence proved the strong feeling and resolution of the newspaper press out of London, mere obstruction was useless and virtually impossible. At last the managers of the telegraphs were brought face to face with the newspaper men. It was only after a hard fight that this was accomplished. Perhaps nothing but the indomitable perseverance and resolution of the writer of the Memorandum from the *Scotsman* office could have produced such an effect. He had become the mouthpiece or at least the representative of the Association, and he gave the telegraph managers no rest till he screwed their courage to the sticking-point of meeting the members.

The effect of the meeting was great. In general discussion the telegraph managers could not defend their charges or the character of the service they gave. On the 23rd of November 1865, Mr. Weaver, manager of the Electric Télégraph Company, wrote a letter, the purport of which will show the nature of the suggestions made by the newspaper men.

First, Mr. Weaver announced in his letter that the companies were prepared to transfer to the Press Association their contracts with provincial newspapers for the supply of telegraphic news. From this it is plain that one of two things, or

perhaps both, had happened at the meeting. Either the newspaper conductors had asked to have the contracts transferred to their Association, or the managers of the companies had suggested such a course as the best answer to the complaints made against the news service they supplied. There is no doubt the service was bad. I can vouch for that. It was almost as bad as it could be. Looking back at it now, I am sometimes inclined to wonder how the public could tolerate it. Of course the answer to that question is that the public could get nothing better. As soon as they could, they showed their appreciation of the new fare. It need not be doubted that at the meeting of the newspaper men with the telegraphists, complaints of the badness of the service were many and strong. The newspaper men may have said, "Hand us over the task of supplying news to ourselves, give us a fair tariff for transmission, and our complaints will cease." Or the managers of the telegraph companies may have said, "You complain of the quality and scantiness of our news. It is all we can afford to give you for what you pay. If you think you can do better, take the provision of news into your own hands, and we will give you favourable terms for transmission." Perhaps there was something said on both sides that pointed to the same conclusion.

At any rate, Mr. Weaver, writing for the companies, offered, as I have said, to transfer the news supply to the Press Association. In regard to the transmission of the news he stated the terms. First,



A reduction of 50 per cent upon the Companies' ordinary public tariff rate, for messages sent during the day between 7 A.M. and 7 P.M., and a reduction of 66 per cent, or say two-thirds, upon the tariff rate for such news as may be handed to the Companies at night—say between 7 P.M. and 7 A.M.

If the terms were accepted, "the companies would require to be guaranteed an amount of work equivalent to the present income of about £13,000 per annum derived from the Press." At that time £13,000 a year for the telegraphic news service of all the newspapers out of London was thought a large sum. What would be thought of it now? It would not pay the bills for news telegraphing of two first-class newspapers. But there was one feature of the offer that showed what may be moderately spoken of as astuteness on the part of the companies. They received £13,000 a year for gathering and transmitting news to papers out of London. Their neat proposal was that they should be guaranteed the £13,000 a year and be relieved of the gathering of news!

Mr. Weaver's letter further stipulated for restrictions upon the length of messages, and for other points which were not likely to make the work of news gathering and transmission any easier.

The offer made in the letter was not accepted. A conference of newspaper conductors was held at Manchester on the 30th November 1865, to consider it, and next day, with their resolutions prepared, they met the managers of the telegraph companies. It is not difficult to understand what must have

passed at this latter meeting, for it led to the issue of a circular by the telegraph companies, which announced a wholly different set of proposals from those in Mr. Weaver's letter of 23rd November.

This new circular was dated 30th December 1865. It began by setting forth proposed charges for telegraphing news messages. These charges were actually a little higher than those offered in Mr. Weaver's letter; but they were higher with a purpose. Practically they were expected to apply to local messages, and not to the bulk of the London work. For the first time the words "Special Wire" are used. The circular announces that contracts for special wires from London to newspapers out of London can be made with the companies. These wires are to be available for the newspaper from 7 P.M. to 3 A.M. Alternative terms are offered. Either all the messages over the special wire may be paid for at reduced tariff rates, with a guarantee of a certain sum per annum; or there may be a general hiring of the wire without regard to the quantity of news messages sent. The charges under this system were to be for a wire to a place distant

Under 100 miles . . . . .	£600 per annum.
„ 200 „ . . . . .	675 „
Above 200 „ . . . . .	.750 „
To Ireland, including Submarine Cable, 1000	„

Here was an opening for enterprise. The pressure upon the companies seemed at last to be telling, indeed to have told. The restless spirit that had brought the pressure to bear—"The

Malignant Being at the *Scotsman* office"—as with a bitter-edged good nature he was called by one of the telegraph managers—might rejoice. The concession gained was the opening of a door or of many doors through which much might be done. There is a letter in existence—I have seen it—in which a newspaper man in London, in full sympathy with the "Malignant Being," warned him that his plans were too comprehensive, and that they never could be realised. They have been realised; they have been far more than realised. They were far-sighted, and they involved possibilities that no one could measure. It would be ridiculous to assume that those possibilities are exhausted. Great progress has been made; but far more will be made in the future.

As soon as the offer of special wires was made, it was accepted by the *Scotsman*. I am inclined to think that there must have been some initial difficulty as to carrying out the hiring proposal; for while "special wire" work began early in February of 1866, the agreement for the unlimited use of a "special wire" was not signed till the 27th February. The wire was taken on the 1st March. That was the beginning of a system which is now all but universal in Great Britain. For years after it had been adopted in Edinburgh, the London papers knew nothing of it. The Continent is to them what London is to newspapers in the country. Yet they had made no step in the direction of "special wires" to the Continent till long after the

provincial newspapers had got their special wires to London.

It would be easy to enlarge upon the direct telegraphic consequences of the new departure. They have been far-reaching. Since March 1866 there has been a continuous growth of telegraphic or telegraphed news in the papers. This growth was greatly accelerated by the transfer of the telegraphs to the Post Office. Mr. Scudamore, the wise official who managed that transfer, kept a watchful eye on the requirements or possible requirements of newspapers; and the result has been enormous expansion. One special wire, in the case of the *Scotsman*, speedily became two; and these two now carry scarcely more than half of the news telegraphed from London during the year. In the old days there might be a column of telegraphed news in the paper in one day. Now it is not uncommon to find forty columns, and the daily average must be thirty. For let it be borne in mind the telegraph system now extends to almost every village in the country; and from these villages come pieces of news, from day to day, most of which would never have been heard of in the old times, or would have got within reach of the printing press a few days late.

Perhaps the growth in telegraphic news cannot be better shown than by a contrast as to cost. In 1864, before the telegraph companies had begun to move or to be moved, the total cost of telegraphic news for the *Scotsman* for the year was £150.



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Last year—1895—the cost was over £9000, and it will be more in the year in which I am writing. Put in brief, the *Scotsman* is paying 20 per cent more per week for telegraphed news than it paid in the whole year of 1864.

## CHAPTER XVII

Growth of newspapers illustrated by the *Scotsman*—A London establishment—Collecting news—Comprehensive plans—What should be given to the public—Parliamentary reporting—Difficulties and annoyances—Efforts to get the Reporters' Gallery opened to newspapers out of London—Objections—The Serjeant-at-Arms—His Objections and Answers—Apathy of other papers—Mr. Gladstone—A Select Committee—Victory !

To those who care nothing for the growth of newspapers or anything else, except, perhaps, the growth of their own pecuniary means, most of what has been told, and all of what remains to be told, will have no interest. But there are others who are not so completely self-engrossed, and who have both the time and the desire to learn something of the growth of an institution which assuredly has played and must continue to play a great part in public affairs. The growth in force, in influence, in usefulness of the Newspaper Press of the United Kingdom, I repeat, cannot be properly understood if attention be concentrated on London newspapers ; and it can be illustrated by the story of newspapers out of London. The Story of the *Scotsman* is taken because that paper is, I may be excused for thinking, a proof of growth, and because it is impossible to

doubt that from its management the impulse to general newspaper progress has largely come.

In an earlier chapter something has been said of the first use to which the "special wire" of the *Scotsman* was put. It bound me to the paper. In February 1866, before the agreement for a wire was signed, I began to act as London agent for the forwarding of news to Edinburgh; and much was sent during that month, while much more would have been sent if the telegraph wires had been in good order, or if the telegraphists had not been indifferent or careless. My appointment was but the beginning of a further extension which has led to a London establishment far larger than the Edinburgh establishment was till long after the *Scotsman* was published daily.

The work of collecting and forwarding London news to Scotland was not only new to me; it was new in itself. The "Intelligence Department" of the telegraph companies had been content to give and show as little intelligence as possible; that is to say, as little as a monopolist could show and a groaning public would tolerate. But the head that had thought out and made possible the special wire had nothing in common with limited intelligence in any sense. The owner of that head had foreseen great possibilities for the well-conducted and enterprising newspaper. His friends and many journalistic opponents told him he was building Castles in the Air. They spoke of his "dreams," and assured him that they never would be realised. The despondent comforters were wrong.

But let me get back to the beginning. It was my duty to choose from the London news at my command what I thought likely to be interesting in Scotland, and to send it through. Experience soon showed that this work would involve an establishment in London; and when, in May 1868, I had arranged to leave London for Edinburgh, an office was taken in Fleet Street and a staff appointed. This in itself was a bold venture. It was a new departure in provincial journalism. It was, so to speak, a bearding of the London lion in his den. "What has the *Scotsman* to do in London?" was the question asked of me by a prominent journalistic friend there. I suggested that it had to gather news, do business, and show some of its London contemporaries the way they should be going. Since its London office was taken, the example has been followed in many directions. Now there are far more provincial newspaper offices in Fleet Street and the Strand than there are London newspaper offices.

Some newspaper conductors were of opinion that there could not be any sufficient work for more than a correspondent in London. I am not sure that some of them do not think so to this day. They are of the men who believe in giving as little to the public as the public will be willing to receive. On one occasion, not many years ago, a most estimable journalist, one of the proprietors of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, told me that he was convinced the *Scotsman* was conducted on wrong lines: it gave



far more than it need give to the public. "We," he added, "take care to avoid that mistake. There is no use in spending money on news that the public do not need." "Who is to judge of the needs of the public?" I asked. "We are," said he. "Well, then, using our judgment, we think the public need many things that you are inclined to withhold from them." He was convinced we were wrong, and his plan was the right one. The *Manchester Examiner and Times* is dead: the *Scotsman* lives and flourishes!

There was one kind of news as to which the *Scotsman* had been anxious long before it could be obtained in its fulness. It was a good report of Parliamentary proceedings. One of the objects set forth as to be aimed at when special wires were obtained was the representation of the *Scotsman* in the Gallery of the House of Commons. The project was derided; nothing, it was said, would induce the officials of the House to add to their troubles by having reporters from newspapers out of London in the Press Gallery. As a matter of fact, the proposal had to be dropped for the time being; but the *Scotsman* was not to be left without Parliamentary reports. It was possible to arrange with the reporters of London newspapers, who would furnish reports when they were desired. They were always desired in the *Scotsman* after the special wires were obtained; and long before the Gallery was avowedly opened to the representatives of the paper, longer reports of Parliamentary proceedings than could be found in

other provincial newspapers appeared with fair regularity.

Still the system was unsatisfactory. The reporters were primarily in the employment of other newspapers. They were not at the absolute disposal of the *Scotsman*. Their services could not always be reckoned upon with certainty. It was their duty to write the reports for their own papers first ; and of course they did their duty. The result was that the *Scotsman* reports were delayed night after night. Sometimes they had to be greatly curtailed ; almost invariably much of them arrived in Edinburgh so late as to be of no, or little, use. It may be thought that this was due to the reports having to be telegraphed. At first that might have been the case to some extent ; but later, very little more time was required to transmit the reports to Edinburgh than was required to send them from the House of Commons to a newspaper office in London. Always the conviction was becoming stronger that there must be direct representation of the paper in the Gallery ; and always were efforts with that object being made.

The connection of provincial journalism with the Gallery of the House of Commons was not a new thing. If I am not mistaken, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Examiner and Times* had reporters in the Gallery some forty years ago. Why they ceased to have them I do not know ; but in 1868 and onwards to 1880 the doors of the House of Commons were shut against all reporters of pro-

vincial newspapers, as such. The privileged men who represented London papers could and did work for provincial papers, as I have shown, but, so far as the officials of the House were concerned, the newspaper world was London. Outside of London there was nothing—at least nothing worthy of admission to the Gallery of the House of Commons. It became my work to open their eyes a little wider.

From 1868-69 to 1880 the *Scotsman*, through me, took up the part of the importunate widow as to admission to the Gallery. Shall I ever forget the interviews I had, the talking I had to do, the dead weight of uninformed obstruction with which I was met! Of course I gave prominent politicians a bad time of it: I was for ever worrying them on the subject. Then it was that a great truth dawned upon me: the House of Commons—I do not mean the building, but the members—is the most hide-bound Chinese-like institution in the world. What has been is and must be *per omnia sæcula sæculorum*. I should not be surprised to learn that it required reams of paper and bottles of ink to get a door opened if it had once been shut by order. In my quest I was sent from this official to that with unvarying courtesy, but with no gain to my cause. When I had interested a prominent politician in the question that occupied my mind, he invariably began by promising that of course what was wanted ought to be done, and he would see about it. He did “see about it,” and learned that nothing could be done without the authority of the Speaker.

"Will you see the Speaker, then, and press the matter upon him?" would be my request.

"Yes"; and the Speaker would be seen, and my friend would be told that the Serjeant-at-Arms must be consulted: the Serjeant-at-Arms would then be consulted; and there a dead wall was encountered. "It was impossible to admit the Provincial Press to the Reporters' Gallery," would be the reply of the Serjeant. Who could contend against so definite a declaration by so high an authority?

It seemed to me that I could. To me the absurdity of the *non possumus* was clear enough; but it did not seem to be so clear to those who were kindly trying to help me.

"There is not room, I am afraid," said one of these friends.

"Then make room," was my irreverent reply.

But making room was just what the officials, and members of the House echoing the officials, seemed to regard as little short of sacrilege. It might have been thought that architects had ceased to exist, and masons and carpenters had become as extinct as the Megatherium. As the house had been built, so it must remain. The accommodation for reporters that was sufficient fifty years ago must be sufficient now, and fifty or a hundred and fifty years hence. London might have doubled its population; the country might increase tenfold in its industries and its requirements; but the Gallery of the House of Commons must never be enlarged.

The vain imagining came to me that if I could



see the Serjeant-at-Arms I could show him the folly of obstruction, and persuade him of the justice of our request. Truly it was a vain imagining. The Serjeant-at-Arms at the time was Lord Charles Russell, who had for his Deputy Col. Forrester. I pressed for an interview with Lord Charles, and got one. Indeed, I got two or three in different years. The result was always the same; the objections always the same. To tell of one interview is to tell of them all.

Objection—"There is not room in the Gallery for more reporters than have admission now."

Answer—"The Gallery can be enlarged."

Objection—"No; it cannot: how would you enlarge it?"

Answer—"I am not an architect; but I can see that if the Gallery were extended on each side, taking part from the Members' Gallery, several seats could be obtained."

Objection—"The members would never allow that."

Answer—"Can you not try them?"

Objection—"Not easily; because it is impossible to say what room would be required if your proposal were carried out."

Answer—"Not much room would be required inside the House."

Objection—"That is not certain. If the *Scotsman* be admitted, all other provincial papers must also be admitted."

Answer—"I am not sure of that. You draw a

line now between London and provincial papers. You even draw a line between papers in London. Why should not a line be drawn between papers in the country?"

Objection—"That could not be done. If the *Scotsman* were admitted, all other provincial papers must be admitted; and that cannot be."

Answer—"It is not in the least probable that all or even a considerable number of provincial newspapers would desire a seat in the Gallery if it were open to them. The expense of keeping a staff of reporters is heavy, and, I suspect, very few of the newspapers would be willing to incur it. Let the experiment be tried."

Objection—"That is not possible. Even if there were room in the Gallery for more reporters than occupy it now, it would be inadvisable to open it to the provincial newspapers. It would be flooded."

Answer—"Then open it to some of the papers."

Objection—"That would be invidious, and indeed impossible. Who would make the selection?"

Answer—"I believe it would make itself."

Objection—"No; I am afraid it is impossible."

Thus my interview would end. Though I always went to those interviews with confident hope, I always came away from them with—not despair—but wonder at the non-necessity for reasoning power in high officials.

Year after year went on with the pressure great and the results nothing. Perhaps if more of the provincial newspapers had taken an interest in the

movement ; if more had been desirous of getting the Gallery open ; if even one other provincial newspaper had worked with us, the years of waiting and hoping and fighting would have been fewer. But there was not one. If in any quarter—I mean newspaper quarter—sympathy with the movement existed, it was most successfully concealed. Of course the London newspapers wanted no intrusion into what they had come to regard as their own domain. The reporters in the Gallery did not want it ; because, if provincial newspapers got in staffs of their own, extra earnings for provincial work were likely to be lessened, if not lost. Provincial newspapers did not want it ; because to keep a staff of reporters in London would be costly, and if the *Scotsman* got a staff in the Gallery, the example must be followed in many cases. The Press Association did not want it ; because provincial newspapers took special reports from it. Indeed the Press Association was the creation of the provincial newspapers after the telegraphs were taken over by the Government in 1869. “What is the use of seeking admission ?” I was often asked—“you get reports from the Press Association. It gives you a good summary, and special reports if you want them.”

My answer to this objection was that we wanted our own reports, and I believed that in the public interest it was desirable we should have them. Here let me say that I never was satisfied with the summary report furnished by the Press Association. It was good—of its kind ; but it was not the kind I liked.

It satisfied English newspapers ; it did not satisfy us, who desired not merely that Scotland should have her fair share of attention in Parliament, but that Scotland should also be interested in Imperial affairs. The Press Association report would give us a long—or at least a longish—account of a debate on an Irish Bill or on an English Bill ; it would give us a few lines of a debate on a Scottish Bill, and no more. Far be it from me to say that this did not represent the respective value of these debates in Cockneydom ; it did not represent their value in Scotland. I have heard it said that a Scottish debate is a weariness to the flesh to most English and all Irish members. That is not wonderful : as a rule they prefer the whipped cream rather than the solid pudding of argument. Perhaps of late this has been changed. I sometimes think that in Scottish debates nowadays much whipped cream has been introduced ; and I am sure a large part of it is sour.

All this does not bring my story of How the Gallery was opened to Provincial Newspapers much forwarder, but it indicates reasons why it was desired that the Gallery should be opened. The way that consummation was reached was through the general election of 1880. In that year a large Liberal majority was returned to the House of Commons, and Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister. I had seen a good deal of him during the election and before it ; for he began his famous Mid-Lothian campaigns in 1879, and we had frequently met. Shortly after the new Parliament had assembled and



the new Ministry had taken their places, I went to London bent mainly on the opening of the Gallery. I had a strong impression that if I could interest Mr. Gladstone in the matter, the desired end would soon be gained, and therefore I asked for an interview. My request was taken to him in the House of Commons. I was in the members' lobby outside. I had thought that perhaps Mr. Gladstone would make an appointment with me. Instead of doing so he came out to the lobby and joined me there. Probably no pair of talkers ever had such attentive onlookers as we had. The eyes of everybody in the lobby were upon us. It turned out that among the press lobbyists, and most likely among others who were present, there was great curiosity to learn what this interview meant—what it could portend. I say this because in several of the newspapers in the country "our Parliamentary correspondent" wrote paragraphs about the interview. It is a sad indication of the weakness of human nature that even among pressmen there can be jealousy which is only relieved by an ill-natured paragraph or two. That was the mode of relief sought in regard to my interview. I have always thought these paragraphs were a waste of indignation. Mr. Gladstone, we may be sure, never saw them; I was not much hurt by them; the public were likely to think more highly of me than I deserved, because they observed me on fairly familiar terms with the political hero of the hour.

What the interview led to was—success. At first the conversation did not seem to promise well.

When I had explained what was desired, it became evident that Mr. Gladstone had not then heard it for the first time. Our cry for the Gallery had reached his ears, and the officials of the House had got their objections before him. He doubted there was no possibility of making room for the reporters who would be introduced. Then came a characteristic passage. Had I ever thought of the possibility of placing reporters below the floor of the House of Commons? He had been told that everything said in the House could be heard there, and he had often desired to know whether that was the case. Would I go below and see? Possibly that might solve a host of difficulties as to the reporting arrangements of the House. I agreed to go; but I also urged that he should agree to the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the whole question of Parliamentary Reporting. He promised to do his utmost; and then having arranged for my admission to the "place below," he returned to the House.

Into the rooms below the House of Commons I went. They are not subterranean; they are really on the ground floor. There is, or there was, a strong wind in them, not draughty, but breezy; for they are, I believe, the channels through which fresh air mainly reaches the House above them. The centre of the floor of that House is grated; more than the centre may be, for aught I know. Through the grating the fresh air ascends, and the sound of speakers' voices descends. I remained in the room for some time, and found I could hear all that was

said, at least as well as it could be heard in the House itself. But I could not see a speaker ; I could not see *the* Speaker. Unless I recognised a voice I could not tell who was speaking. The experience was interesting ; but it did not get the Gallery opened. In no case, without great structural changes, could the floor below be used for reporting.

Another interview with Mr. Gladstone, and the story of my experience below, led to an understanding that, if possible, a Select Committee should be appointed. It was appointed. It seems to have been thought that members who were more or less directly connected with newspapers ought to be on that Committee ; and therefore Mr. W. H. Smith was appointed chairman ; Mr. John Walter of the *Times* was a member, and two other members were Mr. Joseph Cowen of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, and Mr. J. D. Hutchinson of the *Halifax Courier*. Conceivably all these gentlemen might be prejudiced against the opening of the Gallery to provincial newspapers. Mr. Smith, as the representative of the great London newsagents' house, might think that London newspapers alone required consideration. Mr. Walter had for the *Times* the first position as to reporting debates, and might have been excused for thinking that nothing better was required. Neither Mr. Cowen nor Mr. Hutchinson had shown any desire for the representation of their papers in the Gallery ; and might come to the conclusion that what they did not require would not be good for other newspapers, while it might lead to greater expendi-

ture all round. As it turned out, Mr. Smith, as chairman of the Committee, was, what he was in everything he took in hand, an absolutely fair and broad-minded man. Mr. Walter had too much well-founded confidence in the reporting supremacy of the *Times* to feel the slightest jealousy of the admission of provincial newspapers to the Gallery. The other two gentlemen did not like the proposal, and fought against it.

They were not its only opponents. It had not a single outspoken supporter in the provincial press; it had outspoken objectors. The Press Association, through its manager, opposed it. Reporters in the Gallery opposed it. I was examined as a witness, and told my tale and answered objections. Mr. Cowen and Mr. Hutchinson took a good deal of trouble with me. They voiced the objections. All the old Lord Charles Russell and Col. Forrester objections rose up again, with others that pressmen had started. First, there was the structural difficulty. That, I urged, was the business of the House; a just claim was made—a claim as much in the interests of the House as of the public, and no difficulty about finding seats ought to stand against it. There is no doubt that this view prevailed with the Committee. If it was necessary that the Gallery should be opened to provincial newspapers, no question of structural difficulties ought to stand in the way. Was it necessary?

The objectors urged that there was no necessity for it. They said that already there were plenty of



facilities for reporting for provincial newspapers through the news agencies which, as representing provincial newspapers, had seats in the Gallery. The answer was in effect that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander. Would the London papers give up their seats in the Gallery and be satisfied with the Press Association report? Would the *Times* do so? If they would not; if the Press Association reports were not sufficient for or satisfactory to them, why should newspapers out of London be compelled to be satisfied with those reports? To this reply there was no real answer.

But the objection took another form. A report, it was said, was a report. If it was verbatim it could be supplied by anybody, and as it must be the same in all cases and for everybody, why should not the *Scotsman* be satisfied with reports supplied from the same source as other newspapers? In effect my reply was that the last thing Parliament ought to encourage was the supply of all reports from one source. By doing so, members would put themselves at the mercy of a single reporter. He might be dull, or mischievous, or dishonest. I have not met with many dishonest reporters in my time—very very few. But I have met some. I have known reporters who had political opinions, not to say convictions. Those opinions were always generous and usually rather wild; and they told against individual statesmen. Suppose political differences found their way into the one Parliamentary report, what chance would the public have of correcting the

error or of knowing that there was error? Dr. Johnson was a passably honest man, who had nearly a monopoly of Parliamentary reporting; and did not he, in his confidential moments, declare that in his reports he always took care to let the damned Whigs have the worst of it? Independent reports corrected each other. The blunder of one reporter would be corrected by the accuracy of another; and there would be no likelihood of misrepresentation or misunderstanding.

One ingenious gentleman who had a seat in the Gallery brought forward a plan for a uniform report. It had nothing to commend it except its wasted ingenuity. The proprietor of a news agency, a rival of the Press Association, propounded a scheme for producing an official report which should be at the service of all newspapers. It had the incurable defect of all identical reports that have not been corrected by the speakers. If it was to wait for the correction, it would be of no use to the newspapers; if it was not to wait, it might lead at times to serious misapprehension. Besides, no self-respecting newspaper would consent to put its reporting into the hands of officialdom. If the identical report was to be supplied by a trader in reports, it would be giving a wholly unjustifiable monopoly into the hands of that trader, and would leave both Parliament and the newspapers at his mercy. If the report was to be official, that would mean that the Government could control it. Of course all Governments nowadays are honest and pure and strictly scrupulous in all

their dealings. But a bad Government might come, or a bad man in a good Government: and the reports might be tampered with.

All the requirements could be met by providing room for more reporters in the Gallery. Many reports would make an official report for the newspapers unnecessary, and would go far to provide the material for an official report for Parliament.

The Committee reported in favour of an extension of the Gallery, and the allocation of seats in it to individual provincial newspapers, or to combinations of newspapers. The work was accomplished. The extension of the Gallery did not lead to a flooding of the House of Commons with small provincial papers. The *Scotsman* got the first seat. Other newspapers singly or in combination got seats. The old belief in the impossibility of the change was broken down. The papers that could not afford or did not choose to incur the expense of keeping a staff of reporters in the Gallery, kept to the Press Association. But from the beginning of 1881 the *Scotsman* has had its own staff in Parliament, and its own reports of Parliamentary proceedings. As a rule those reports have been longer than any others save those in the *Times*; and to their general accuracy, members of the House of Commons have frequently borne testimony.

## CHAPTER XVIII

London following Scotland—Special newspaper trains—The Glasgow special—The Perth special—The example followed in London—New machines—The *Times*' efforts to obtain quick printing—Its early machines—Hoe's invention—The rotary web machine—Adoption by the *Scotsman*—Latest developments—Mr. James Law—London correspondence—Descriptive summaries—Book reviews as news.

By way of illustrating the growth of newspapers out of London, I have told a good deal of the Story of the *Scotsman*. There are many other things that might be told—all bearing evidence of the fact that British journalism is not exclusively or principally London journalism; that British journalistic enterprise has—at least in later years—been more vigorous out of London than in it; and that London newspapers are, as I write, availing themselves of methods which were devised for them in Scotland. One of these methods is the "special wire." That was the invention of the provinces: it was first adopted by the *Scotsman*; it was not taken up till years afterwards by the London papers. Let me point out another instance of the light which has been shed upon business arrangements of London Daily Newspapers by the ingenuity and enterprise of the *Scotsman*.

Having got a mind comparatively at ease about



telegraph work and newspaper agents and other previous troubles, the Business Head of the *Scotsman* turned his attention about the end of 1871 in another direction. The distribution of the paper in most parts of Scotland was as good and as speedy as the railways, coaches, and steamboats permitted; but there were parts of the country where there was room for improvement if the means could be found. Glasgow and the West of Scotland had papers of their own; and those papers had great populations at their doors, and could be distributed hours before the *Scotsman* could be got into the same field. The question that presented itself was whether in this field there was room for the paper, and if there was, how could it be enabled to occupy that room. Not Glasgow only had to be considered. From Glasgow, early trains started for the South and West of Scotland, and of course those early trains took Glasgow newspapers. They did not take the *Scotsman* because it had to travel across the country, and the ordinary Edinburgh and Glasgow trains did not arrive in the latter city until too late for the outgoing South and West trains. No newspaper can afford to be hours behind its competitors in reaching the places where readers are to be found. The *Scotsman* was late in Glasgow and the district served by Glasgow. Frequently there were requests that something should be done to enable would-be readers to get the paper as early as they could get the Glasgow papers.

How was the difficulty to be got over? How was the *Scotsman* to be got into Glasgow before the early trains left that city and before the inhabitants of Glasgow itself were making ready to go to business? The "Special Wire" suggested the idea of a "Special Train." Before long the Business Head of the *Scotsman* was in communication with the Manager of the North British Railway as to the possibility of running a special train with parcels at such an hour as to enable the staff of the paper in Glasgow—for there was an office in that city—to get them off by early trains as well as distribute them in the city itself. There were few difficulties; at least there were few of the kind that had stood in the way of the change of the old system of news-middlemen or in the way of telegraphic reform and extension. The matter was soon arranged. For a fixed sum per year the *Scotsman* was to have a special train from Edinburgh to Glasgow every week-day morning, leaving about four o'clock and arriving an hour later. If any other Edinburgh paper wished to send parcels it was to pay part of the cost; but in any case the *Scotsman* was responsible for the whole. I believe some of the then existing papers in Edinburgh did occasionally use the train; and I believe that a paper which was started after the then existing papers had died also used the train. It is to be feared that none of them greatly required it. The train began to run on 1st March 1872; it is running still.

An examination of time-tables relating to the North of Scotland—the time-tables of the Highland Railway and the Great North of Scotland Railway with their branches—revealed the fact that if the *Scotsman* could be got to Perth a little earlier than was possible by ordinary train it could be forwarded to the North and distributed there hours sooner than it was. Again the “special train” was proposed, and on the 18th of August 1872 one began to run for the *Scotsman* from Edinburgh to Perth, where it caught the early trains to the North and North-East.

No enterprise of the kind had ever been attempted in London. The newspapers there had all London at their doors; but they did comparatively little out of London. There was a belief firmly rooted in the London journalistic mind that their newspapers were not only the finest in the world, but the finest in Great Britain. I purposely state the belief in that way, because it bears directly on what I have to tell. Practically the London newspapers did not compete commercially with the papers of the world; they did compete with the papers in Great Britain out of London. It was wonderful, then, that they had never sought to get to the great towns near them so early in the day as to meet the local newspapers on their own ground. They had done nothing of the kind. The old news-agency plan, the old reliance on ordinary trains, had been good enough for them. It happened that in 1873 Mr. John Macdonald of

the *Times* came to Edinburgh on a visit. There was a special reason, to be told presently, why he should come to the *Scotsman* office. He was shown everything, and he took away with him the idea of the Special Train. Before long he made an arrangement with the London and North-Western Railway to start a train for Birmingham about five o'clock in the morning. After the train had been running two or three months, the other railway companies going North and West started like trains; and now what is known as the "Newspaper Train" runs regularly. The suggestion of it came from Edinburgh, which had been years in advance.

It has just been said that Mr. John Macdonald of the *Times* had a special reason for visiting the *Scotsman*. That reason was that new printing machines built at the *Times* office had been brought into use in the office of the *Scotsman*. In the first chapter of this book I have given some account of the progress of newspaper printing, from the old wooden press to the rotary web machine, throwing off its 23,000 or 24,000 copies an hour, printed on both sides and folded. The *Times* led the way in the adoption and development of these rotary web machines. The proprietors of that paper were striving after quicker printing for many years. In 1851 they showed in the Great Exhibition a printing machine which was new. The inventor's name was Applegarth. I remember the machine quite well. A tall cylinder, upon which the type was placed, revolved vertically, and as it



revolved it met in turn six or eight cylinders over which passed the sheets to be printed. Each sheet was "laid on" separately, and was printed only on one side. The arrangement was very awkward, because each sheet had to be put into the machine flat and then turned on its edge to suit the vertical printing cylinders. It was not believed possible to make the printing cylinder revolve horizontally, because of the difficulty of keeping the type in its place. Be it remembered that every letter, or almost every letter, in a newspaper is picked up separately by the compositor. Each type is so finished that it stands in perfect adjustment with its fellow, and each line is supposed to be accurately "spaced out," so that all are exactly the same length. As a matter of fact, one line will be slightly tighter than another. This is of no importance, and makes no appearance, so long as the "form" is a flat surface; but obviously if the type were placed on a horizontal cylinder so that at times it was hanging head downwards, the law of gravitation would tell, and any loose letters would drop out. This was the difficulty which, in the case of the *Times* machine, had been got over by making the cylinder vertical.

Still there was danger of type dropping out, and, as I have said, the arrangement was very awkward. Colonel Hoe of New York got over the awkwardness and produced machines which for many years helped forward the growing newspapers. It had been suggested that type might be used slightly wedge-shaped, so that when it was "locked up" it

would be wedged together. This was scarcely possible, though the experiment was tried. Col. Hoe took another way. Everybody knows the line that runs between the columns of a newspaper. It is produced by what is called a "column rule," usually, if not invariably, made of brass. Col. Hoe made these wedge-shaped, and fitted them into "turtles," which were sections of the printing cylinder, page size. The column rules were made thicker at the top than at the bottom; so that when the screws were applied the type was wedged together at the top where the largest circumference of the cylinder was, as well as at the bottom where it was smaller. In this way horizontal type cylinder machines with horizontal printing cylinders became possible. They were not perfect; for in spite of all precautions type would drop out and make bad work. But they were soon made comparatively perfect by the discovery of the *papier maché* process of stereotyping, which removed all risks of falling type.

Still something better and quicker was required, and for some time previous to 1871 the proprietors of the *Times* had been experimenting with a rotary web machine which would print both sides of the paper at one operation. It might be interesting to know whence the first idea of such a machine came, and from whom. The path of that inquiry is too thorny for me. It is mine to tell what I know and have seen, not to attempt to settle the claims of rival inventors. This is certain—the *Times* was the first paper wholly printed by such a

machine. The invention had been worked out in the *Times* office, and the machines in use were built by the proprietors themselves, or rather, I presume, by Mr. John Walter, who was the owner of the printing plant of the paper. The machines worked smoothly and quickly, and did excellent work with the paper on which the *Times* was printed. Would they do equally well with the comparatively thin paper on which the *Scotsman* was printed? The question was asked, because it was clear that some such machines must be introduced if the ever-growing requirements of the paper were to be met. Mr. John Macdonald of the *Times* believed they would. The Business Head of the *Scotsman* believed they would. But it was doubtful, or seemed to be; and there were practical men who asserted that a thinner paper than that used by the *Times* could not be printed, because it would not bear the strain of being drawn into the printing cylinders from the reel. Many enterprising business men have from time to time refused to put their trust in "practical men," where new machinery has been concerned, and the Business Head of the *Scotsman* followed their example. Machines were ordered from the *Times*, and by the end of 1871 were in full work. They had solved the supposedly difficult problem. It was found that they printed on the thinner paper as well as on the thicker. In short, the experiment was completely successful; and now there is not a newspaper of any note in the kingdom that is not printed on a rotary machine.

The latest introductions into the *Scotsman* office are machines that will print each at the rate of 24,000 an hour, and will produce a four, six, eight, ten, or twelve-page paper at that speed. How long they will serve to meet the requirements of the paper I will not profess to predict. If the future is to be judged by the past it will not be many years before they will be superseded.

While I have been writing of the developments of the *Scotsman* I have spoken of the Business Head of the establishment as the instigator of and the instrument for carrying them out. I believe that to him more than to any other man in the world the newspaper press of Great Britain—at least that part of it out of London—owes most of the progress it has made. Closely observant, entering minutely into details, he saw what could be done for removing obstacles to progress and extending the usefulness of the newspaper, and he saw the methods that must be adopted. It is safe to say that he never took a step without having carefully thought out all consequences. He never took a step backwards. If a certain change were made in the paper—its size or its general arrangement—everybody knew that it was to be continued. He never tried experiments with the paper, making promises to-day which were broken to-morrow, or introducing as permanent a feature which disappeared in a month. He always knew the ground upon which he was treading, and he led no one into slippery ways. There were many of the newspaper men out of



London who thought him a "pestilent fellow," for he was always either carrying out in the *Scotsman*, or seeking to get the opportunity of carrying out, schemes which involved expenditure. The objectors only looked at the cost; he looked at the result. They complained that they should be dragged or driven out of their easy-going ways. He paid no attention to their outcries. He helped to make many of them rich against their own inclinations. He was the head and front, the brain and eye of the movements that have, since 1860, brought about a complete revolution in the press of Great Britain. He never obtruded his personality. Always energetic, he was always modest. What he has been he is. All of us find him the same James Law we knew more than a quarter of a century ago; the same kindly adviser, the same generous proprietor, the same true man to whom any of us would trust our lives and all we may possess.

It has been a feature in the *Scotsman* office for the last thirty years, and probably more, that no sharp line has been drawn between the Editorial and the Business Management of the paper. I do not mean that the Business Manager directs the policy to be adopted, or that the Editor helps to keep the books. There is no interference of any kind with the Editor, and no interference with the Business Management; but there is the closest association and interchange of views between the two departments. It may be thought that there is nothing of much novelty in all this; the people who

think so know little about newspapers. But my reason for mentioning the fact is that there are two matters in which I believe the *Scotsman* led the way, and in which Editor and Business Manager had joint concern.

Some time ago a claim was made for a particular newspaper in London that it had been the first to introduce those political and other paragraphs which in papers out of London are usually found in the "London Letter." The claim was unfounded. In an earlier chapter I have said that probably the article written by Edmund Yates in the *Morning Star* with the heading "The Flaneur" was the model on which many London Letters have been built. There can be little doubt that the suggestion is well founded. But before Yates wrote there had been political paragraphs in the *Scotsman*. No doubt there was a great difference between the paragraphs he wrote and those that appeared in Edinburgh. The "smart" man of Cockneydom will endorse that statement with intention. He may be passed by. The difference between the two was that Yates mainly dealt with gossip; the *Scotsman* sought to confine itself to facts.<sup>1</sup> This feature is maintained. The "London Letter," when it took collected form, was described as "From Private Correspondence." That was and is in the

<sup>1</sup> When arrangements were being made for the transfer of the telegraphs to the Government, Edmund Yates, as a Post Office official, had to visit Edinburgh in connection with the transfer. He noticed the London Letter, and was told how it was compiled. He declared that it opened a new field for literary men like himself; and subsequently he was a contributor to it.

main a correct description. Friends of the Editor, or of the paper, who had information gave it by letter, and it was put into shape in the office. The one point insisted upon was that the statements made should relate to facts, and should not chronicle mere gossip. That requirement is insisted upon now. There may be, and often are, contributions from a dozen different hands in one Letter. There were London Letters in the far-distant past. They were either descriptive or gossipy. The *Scotsman* letter "From Private Correspondence" was a new departure. It has been imitated—wisely imitated—in many quarters since.

Another feature which has endured, and is likely to endure, is the description of Parliamentary proceedings. It was long felt that though a report of a speech told what had been said, it did not convey the faintest idea how it had been said. You might understand arguments, if there were any, but you could form no idea of manner. There might be a dispute in the House of Commons; the words used might be sharp enough; but the report of them conveyed little knowledge of the tone and feeling of the House itself. This was a shortcoming that required remedy.

When efforts were being made to bring about an alteration there was in the Gallery of the House of Commons a gentleman named Spellan. He was the chief of the staff of the *Daily News*. He was a portly man, with jet-black hair—which he did not dye—and white-gray whiskers. I remember he told

me one day that he had been into a barber's shop to have his hair cut. The operator asked him what he wished. "To have my hair cut," he said. "I suppose you mean to have your wig dressed, sir?" said the operator, with a broad smile. He had been misled by the black hair and the gray whiskers. Spellan lost his temper, and used more or less Biblical language.

Spellan knew everybody in the House of Commons. He was an educated man, and had a ready pen. When it was explained to him what we required, he undertook to do it; and until shortly before his death he did it well. His summary of Parliament, brightly descriptive, was the forerunner of many summaries of a like kind. Even the London newspapers—or some of them—began, after a proper and long time, to think that there might be something in the descriptive summary; and they have adopted it.

In still another direction the *Scotsman* led the way. For the last two or three years there has been a good deal of mutual admiration among some of the London daily newspapers because they have made more or less prominent features of reviews of books. Their praises have been in each other's mouths and have filled them. Books are noticed quickly—that is, some books are. "They were rarely noticed quickly till recently. It is a new and an excellent feature of the —." So runs the laudation with many floral decorations. Now it is quite true that until recently book-reviewing was put into a back place in the London dailies. Some



of them rarely had such a thing as a review of a book. Even in the case of the *Times*, where reviewing was a department in the hands of a skilled man, the reviews only appeared when there was nothing else to be printed. I have myself seen in the *Times* office many many columns of reviews in type waiting for a chance to appear. In short, book-reviewing was treated as a matter of secondary importance.

Still, every now and then, when a book by some distinguished author or on some exceptionally interesting subject appeared, it was promptly noticed. This was an admission that the public might desire to have early knowledge of a book. If of one book, why not of others? They could not all be of the same merit or the same interest; but all of them had interest for somebody. Information as to their appearance and their contents would be as much news as information in regard to any other matter. This was in effect the argument that was pressed in the *Scotsman* office. It has already been told that from the first the paper had paid attention to literature. Next to politics, literature had been, in the beginning, its chief subject for treatment. But the news feature of literature had not been practically recognised. Attempts had been made to secure early treatment of books. A proposal to have a particular day when book notices should regularly appear was made. The idea was that every book that came to hand during the week should be carefully noticed on the arranged day. In that way the

news character of the reviews would have recognition. Practically the plan would not work. It often happened that on the arranged day there came a flood of perishable news that washed the books out of the paper. In 1886 the remedy was found. In that year the Business Head of the paper arranged that on every Monday morning the paper should be half as large again as usual, that the "Books of the Week" might be noticed as they deserved.

From that time till now the arrangement has continued. Every week a feature of Monday's paper has been the Reviews of Books. One result has been an enormous increase of the books sent for notice. They are certainly not fewer than 5000 or 6000 a year. So numerous are they that it is often impossible to get all the concise and carefully-written notices of them into Monday's paper. Then they overflow into the papers of other days. But they are never allowed to get old. Before the next Monday comes they have all been printed. This is the story of book-reviewing in its news aspect which some of the London papers are cackling over as if they had laid the egg themselves.

## CHAPTER XIX

Editors of the *Scotsman*—Alexander Russel—Those who knew him—My association with him—His birth and education—Apprenticed to be a printer—Shorthand writing—Russel in Berwick, Cupar, and Kilmarnock—He joins the *Scotsman*—Accession to the Editorship—"Russel of the *Scotsman*"—Anonymous journalism—The work he did—A writing Editor—His politics—His sturdy Whiggism—Hatred of mere political expedients—Ecclesiastical criticism—"The enemy of the people of God"—Opposition to the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill.

IN one respect the *Scotsman* has a unique record. It was founded in January 1817. As I write it is June 1896. The paper has therefore been in existence for seventy-nine years and a half. In that long period only three men have been really responsible for its political direction. Mr. M'Laren began with it in 1817 and retired from it in 1848—a period of thirty-one years. Mr. Alexander Russel joined it in 1845, and died in 1876—a period of thirty-one years. I became associated with it in February 1866, and we are now at 1896. There were two interruptions—they could not be accurately described in other terms. One was when Mr. M'Laren stood aside for a couple of years and Mr. M'Culloch took his place; the other was for four years after the death

of Mr. Russel, when the Rev. Dr. Wallace was associated with myself. But these interruptions altered no matter of fact. The real direction of the paper lodged with Mr. M'Laren in his time and with myself in mine. I doubt whether any other paper has or ever had such an editorial record.

Mr. M'Laren I did not know: he was dead before I came to Edinburgh. Mr. Russel I knew as few men could have known him. Of course Mr. John Ritchie Findlay had longer knowledge of him, and was as intimately associated with him as I was. They were closely connected in the work of the *Scotsman* from the beginning of Russel's career upon the paper till its close. I have often wished that Mr. Findlay had put in print the story of his association with Russel. Unfortunately he has not done so. Then I doubt whether any man knew Russel better than Mr. Law. They were on most intimate terms. Long years before his death Russel had learned to lean upon Mr. Law as on a sure staff, just as in earlier times he had leaned on Mr. Findlay. I remember on one occasion before I came to Edinburgh, Mr. Russel and myself had walked out to Hyde Park. There we sat, and I heard from him many things as to himself. But the chief feature of his talk was his praise of Mr. Law. To that work he went back again and again, and it was easy to see, first, that he had a most affectionate disposition; and second, that he had come to regard Mr. Law more as a son than as a friend, and that he had the most profound respect for Mr. Law's judgment.



But when all has been said, I still think that I knew as much of Russel as an Editor as any man. He had many friends. They saw his social side, and they knew him as Editor through the paper. I also knew him on the social side; and I knew him as a worker. The innermost recesses of his editorial mind had to be known to me. The way in which he looked at public questions might be generally known to many men; but the practical application of his views could not be wholly understood by what appeared in print. You may meet a man every day of every week at the dinner-table; if you do not meet him at his work, you do not accurately know him. Among his social acquaintances Russel passed for a jovial, rather boisterous being, who laughed at difficulties and at the world generally. In society he was all that: in his work he was a nervous, anxious man, who gave all his mind and all his attention for the time being to the subject on which he was engaged, and who would often discuss that subject conversationally for some time before he wrote, as if he were most anxious to be sure of the ground on which he stood. That was prudent; but it was not the side of his character that was seen by those with whom he dined.

Alexander Russel was born in Edinburgh in December 1814. His father died when he was young; and he had to pick up his school teaching at various "seminaries" in Edinburgh. Most men have found that elementary school teaching is only useful to them in after-life as having put into their

hands the weapons with which education may be conquered. When elementary teaching is done and secondary teaching begins, an advance is made into a field where distinctive knowledge is to be acquired. Russel seems never to have gone far into that field. He was not a classical scholar. He had read history, and had thought out many of its lessons. He had revelled in the more robust poetry of the Restoration. In his room at the *Scotsman* office he had several bound volumes of manuscript extracts from English poetry—Shakespeare, Milton, Herrick, Byron, Dryden, Cowper, Wordsworth, and others. Once I asked him why he had been at the trouble to write out these extracts. "Because I could not buy the books to keep," was his reply; "nowadays all the best poetry and the best prose of past times, if not of to-day, can be got for very little money. When I wrote those extracts, books were dear, and if they had been much cheaper I had no money to spend on them. I borrowed them and wrote out what seemed to me the best parts of them." It is not difficult to understand how he acquired his education so far, or what manner of student he was.

While yet a lad he was apprenticed to be a printer in the office of Mr. John Johnston, whose wife edited *Tait's Magazine*. She it was who discovered the pen-and-ink ambition of Russel. She encouraged him to write, and some of his productions were printed in the magazine and in other periodicals. This is what tradition says: I never saw those early pieces, but I do not in the least

doubt that they were written and printed. Everybody knows that a French private soldier carries a Marshal's baton in his knapsack, or may do so. Every lad who goes into a printing office has an Editor's chair awaiting him if he chooses to qualify himself for it. Russel did so choose. He taught himself shorthand. The fact reminds me of a passage between him and myself not long after I had come to Edinburgh. He was in the habit of making shorthand notes and jottings on the margins of newspapers or documents that he might be reading, with the intention of writing about the matter noted. One day I took up a newspaper thus scribbled over with shorthand. Some of the characters were familiar to me. I looked more closely and found that with a little trouble I could read all the notes. It is not likely that I should have taken the trouble, but that the first few words I deciphered showed me that Mr. Russel was wrong as to a fact on which comment apparently was to be based.

I went to his room and asked if he had been writing on the matter annotated. He said he had.

"And you have said"—so-and-so ; I forget the exact point.

"How do you know that ?" he asked.

"Because I have read your notes here."

"You've what !" he cried, with a great display of comic horror.

"I've read your notes."

"Do you know Mavor's system of shorthand ?"

"I do ; it is the system I write."

“Gracious goodness!” he exclaimed. “Then there can be no more security in my note-taking for me.”

Then I told him he was wrong as to his facts; and the paper was saved from a blunder because he had taught himself Mavor’s system of shorthand when he was young, and I had done the same.

Learning shorthand is the first step forward of the printer’s apprentice who aspires to an editorial chair. The next step is a reportership. In Russel’s younger days there were few reporters who did nothing but report. The reporter was the Editor as well: he was often the canvasser for advertisements. If the terminology of the stage were to be adopted, the reporter of the period might be described as a “general utility man.” I doubt whether Russel called himself a reporter: more likely he took the higher honour at once and called himself Editor. He might fairly do so; for he was all the Editor known in the office of the paper upon which he was first engaged. That paper was the *Berwick Advertiser*. Russel was there for some considerable time, and then joined the *Fife Herald*. I never heard him say much about Berwick: he often talked of Cupar and his experiences there. The rival paper to the *Herald* had for Editor a clever, witty man and good classical scholar—James Bruce, an Aberdonian, author of *Eminent Men of Aberdeen*, and *Eminent Men of Fife*, also of two volumes of *Classical and Historical Portraits*, which Thackeray praised. Russel was Liberal; Bruce was Tory; at least he



was Editor of the Tory journal. They were the best of comrades. They attacked each other as Editors in their respective papers, and enjoyed each other's company as friends. At a later date they were to become colleagues ; for Bruce took an engagement on the *Scotsman* as assistant to Russel.

In 1844, Russel went to Kilmarnock to help in the foundation of a new Liberal journal there. But he was not to remain long in Ayrshire. Mr. M'Laren wanted an assistant on the *Scotsman*. Mr. John Ritchie, the proprietor of the paper, had noted Russel's writing at Cupar, and had seen in it the promise of great journalistic strength. A shrewd, wise, observing man was John Ritchie. Under a plain business exterior he had much insight into character and sound judgment. He offered Russel the post of assistant to Mr. M'Laren, and it was gladly accepted. At that time the *Scotsman* was admired by all politicians, or at least by all Liberal politicians. Those who did not like it yet recognised its ability and influence. To a young politician like Russel, who had had his political opinions strengthened into convictions by the paper, a share in its work was a prize worth striving for. To Russel it came without striving, except in the sense of honest work done in other fields in support of principles which were expounded and upheld in the *Scotsman*. Often, later, he told how to be the Editor of the *Scotsman* had been the ambition of his youth.

It was in March 1845 that Russel came to Edin-

burgh to settle. He was young and enthusiastic. Mr. M'Laren was old and cautious. At every turn the older man recognised the ability of the younger man. It is a fair assumption—though it is only an assumption—that Mr. M'Laren foresaw great developments of the paper, and knew that both because of age and because of a certain intellectual slowness, which was not dulness, he would not be able to meet them. Whether that be so or not, it is certain he was weary of the work and wanted relief. In the comparative youth of Russel, in his wide political knowledge, in his agile intellect, Mr. M'Laren could not but see forces in excess of his own, and exactly the forces required to meet and adequately deal with the growing newspaper needs of the time. There seems to have been some slight misgiving as to Russel's caution. It has sometimes occurred to me that misgivings of this kind have been a tradition of the office. Mr. M'Laren had them as to himself in a peculiar way. He had them as to Russel. The fact was, Russel said brightly and boldly what the older man put solidly yet tentatively. No man was really more cautious than Russel; and when this fact had been established, Mr. M'Laren in January 1849 formally passed over the Editorship to the hands in which it had in reality been for nearly three years.

Russel had, then, achieved a position which he rightly valued as the highest to which a journalist of his time could aspire within the limits of journalism. How he used that position, how he

magnified it, all men know as a tradition, many men know of their own experience. He came to be known as "Russel of the *Scotsman*," and there have been people who have spoken of him as having broken through the impersonality of the press. He, they say, was the *Scotsman*. He was not. If he had been the *Scotsman*, the paper would have died when he did. He was not the *Scotsman* while he lived, and no one knew this better than himself. I doubt whether at any time such a thought passed through his mind. He was always working for the growth and renown of the paper. Even when the hand of death was pressing more and more heavily on him before the last blow, he was desirous to produce something that might give the paper strength. Every letter he wrote from his country-place spoke either of articles sent, or of disappointment that planned articles had not been accomplished. He wanted to add to the building: he never thought he was the building.

It is not an uncommon cry of the shallow-pated or the angry, that the views expressed in a newspaper are only one man's opinions, and ought to have no more weight in a newspaper than if he had spoken them. These are the critics who condemn what they call the anonymous press. There is one good thing to the credit of the wit of Professor Tait of the Edinburgh University—there may be more; if there are, I never heard them or heard of them. He was delivering the address to the students at a capping ceremonial, and he fell foul of the press—

nobody could ever clearly make out for what reason. "The anonymous press," he said, "was the 'pestilence that walketh in darkness.'" It was clever, and it embodied the old Tory view of the press. Many of those who talk of an article in a newspaper as conveying only one man's opinion would, so far, agree with Professor Tait. The idea is foolishness. An article in a newspaper may be written by one man; though sometimes it is written by more than one. But behind it is the newspaper itself—an entity which must be taken into account. It is sometimes said that newspaper men write what they do not believe. I have some reason to think there may be newspaper men who do this thing; but they are not many, and no Editor would employ them if he were wise. Unfortunately they are employed. Why do they write against their beliefs? Is it not because the paper for which they write advocates principles or opinions with which they do not agree? The illustration shows the foolishness of the "one man's opinion" theory. A newspaper is something apart from the newspaper writer; and no Editor with a grain of common-sense would dream of making his paper the vehicle of his own opinions without regard to its responsibility and its reputation for consistency.

All this may seem to be a long and prosy digression. It may be both long and prosy: it is not a digression. It is meant to show the spirit in which Russel regarded his connection with the *Scotsman*. He certainly never accepted the pro-



position that such a newspaper is but a cloak for an individual. He never made believe as to his association with the paper one way or the other. He was proud of that association, but he did not misunderstand its nature. I do not think it need be doubted that he regarded the description "*Russel of the Scotsman*" as a title of great honour; but he would always have insisted on the retention of the preposition in the description.

Many pens have written of Russel as an Editor and newspaper writer. Few of them seem to me to have known much about him in either capacity. No doubt the paper bore witness to his skill as an Editor. Everybody, or almost everybody, thought it was an everyday proof of his skill as a writer. It was nothing of the kind; for the reason that the ordinary reader could not disentangle what he wrote from what was written by others. In the early years of his Editorship, when the paper was published twice a week, most of the articles that appeared might be his, all of them certainly were not. When the paper began to be published daily, he wrote a great deal. It is said that in forty or fifty consecutive publications of the paper an article from his hand appeared. That is not a wonderful performance as such things are judged nowadays. I have not examined the articles Russel thus wrote; but I venture to say that the last would be as good as the first, and that though the subjects differed and the mode of treatment varied, they were from first to last of fairly equal merit. But he could not

write every article in the paper. Yet outside critics attributed all the articles to him ; at least they attributed all the best—all that showed humour—to him. In this way some myths have been substituted for facts in regard to his work.

It ought always to be remembered, when Russel is spoken of as an Editor, that the conception of the duties of that office was different in Edinburgh and in London. There was a like difference between English provincial papers and London papers. The conception of the duties of an Editor in London was, and is, that he ought not to write himself, but correct and mould the writings of others. In Edinburgh the Editor was expected to write himself as well as to deal with the writings of others. In my opinion the Edinburgh view is the correct one, if newspapers are to be really vigorous exponents of principles, or vigorous critics. If an Editor does not feel a keen interest in a question, he cannot treat it or have it treated properly, unless he is fortunate enough to find a writer who does take a keen interest in it. Any skilled hand can produce an article of some kind on any subject : only the man who believes with all his heart in what he writes, and takes a deep interest in it, can produce an article that will move the public. Readers are quick to see through mere phrase-making and sentence-spinning. Thus ninety-nine out of every hundred newspaper articles written to order never have or could have the slightest weight. This is why I think an Editor should write as well as mould what is written.

Assuredly Russel believed in the system. He was deeply in earnest in his political convictions and in his belief in the importance of the duties he had to perform. It has already been said that in social life he was known as a playful humourist, a jovial being who made all jovial about him. Many people found it difficult to believe that he could be the serious worker that the *Scotsman* showed he was. I do not believe that he could have been induced by any consideration to budge a hair's breadth from the resolute assertion of what he regarded as vital principles. He was a Whig. The name became a reproach in the mouths of Radicals: in the mouths of their successors it is a reproach now. Yet Whig principles, or the adoption of them, had freed Scotland and England from a host of political evils. They had ensured the freedom that was enjoyed and that has extended. They had regard for safe constitutional progress. They were against utter destruction and in favour of building up. Russel held to them with all the determination of his political nature. There was not an atom of what was and is known as Old Toryism in him. He was not for preserving anything in any institution merely because it was old. He did not believe in keeping a new generation in the tight garments of their forbears. But he was not for trying experiments in the hope that they might turn out successful. He did not believe in political Utopias. He had no faith in the teaching of Radical politicians that a New Heaven and a New Earth would be created if

the Church were disestablished, manhood suffrage adopted, and the House of Lords abolished. He was not for perpetually throwing the Constitution into the melting-pot.

Neither did Russel believe in putting patches on political sores. He did not expect total regeneration from the adoption of any measure; and he expected no good whatever from measures that, without regard to principle or to collateral circumstances, sought to put a stop to some admitted evil. His range of political view was wide. Every proposal was tested by principle and by regard to its probable if not certain effect on other subjects than that to which it was expected to apply. He was in favour of Disestablishment, on the sound basis of Religious Equality: he could never have supported the action of some of the advocates of Disestablishment in these days. He did not believe that the end justifies the means. He would rather see a reform that he desired postponed indefinitely than snatch it with dirty hands. Trickery of all kinds was hateful to him. No matter whether it was in ecclesiastical affairs or in the region of politics, he held it up to scorn and derision.

Especially did he delight in trouncing ecclesiastical offenders. He dealt them blows which were not less hurtful because they were given with a laugh and a joke. The ecclesiastics winced and cried out; but the blow told, and though its effect might not be to greatly chasten him who was stricken, it weakened his influence with the public.



It goes without saying that Russel was spoken of as a sinful man. The *Scotsman* under his guidance was declared to be the enemy of Christianity. He used to tell a story on this point which illustrates the teaching of some of those who were touched by the whip of his criticism.

There had been, as there often has been in the Highlands, a ministerial outburst against dancing. Some unfortunate Free Church young men and maidens had sinned against the light by dancing at a wedding or some festivity. Their pious pastor had denounced them, threatened them with excommunication, given them the promise of the Nether depths, and had indulged in general condemnation of the sin of dancing. The *Scotsman* had criticised this minister with infinite humour, and had told him some home truths. Shortly afterwards Russel was taking a holiday and found himself travelling by coach in Sutherlandshire. There was some stoppage at a hotel door, round which were standing several of the men of the place whose day's work it commonly was to watch the coach arrive and depart. Russel noticed two or three of these industrious men looking at him, and overheard their words.

"See that man sitting on the coach?"

"Yes; who is he?"

"Don't you know him?"

"No; who is he?"

"That iss the Enemy of the People of God. It iss Russel the Editor of the *Scotsman*."

These pious people believed that the *Scotsman* was the enemy of Christianity because that was the teaching of their pastors, who resented criticism. Nothing is more certain than that Russel never attacked Christianity, or Judaism, or Mahomedanism, or any form of doctrinal belief. Those who knew him best knew that in him there was a deep vein of sincere religious feeling. He did not pray with the Pharisee. He did not parade his religious beliefs and exalt his own piety before the people. But there was in him far more genuine piety than in many of those who are more outspoken on the subject, and whose goodness is plainly manifested from the mouth outwards. Nothing would induce him to write a word for the paper, or to allow a word to be written, that could properly be regarded as an attack upon any man's belief. Into the field of theology he would not go, nor would he allow the paper to enter therein. He wrote much on what is known in Scotland as the Sabbath question. He would have nothing to do with Sabbatarianism, but he resolutely declined to enter on the Scriptural argument. He treated it simply as a question of personal judgment and wise liberty. He never dreamed of constituting himself the judge or the censor of the religious opinions of others. He held that no newspaper had any right to interfere in such matters. He was for the widest toleration. It mattered not to him what a man believed—that was for himself to consider. But the walk and conversation of men were subjects for legitimate

criticism. Thus he was ever ready to criticise what he regarded as the extravagant pretensions of the ministers, whether in pulpit, Presbytery, Synod, or Assembly. They did not like it; few people do like being whipped. The more arrogant and the weaker ministerial vessels assumed that religion was attacked in their persons. It was a false pretence. Priestcraft as against civil and religious liberty was barred; and, as everybody knows, priestcraft is sometimes found in the Presbytery. Russel would have none of it. His hand was ever against what he honestly believed to be cant, bigotry, or intolerance. He was equally in favour of full religious toleration.

This latter feature was exemplified in the course he took in 1851, when Lord John Russell brought forward the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. The Pope had created Roman Catholic Bishoprics in England and designated them by territorial names. The Ultra-Protestant world was at once in a flame. Pulpits rang with denunciation of the "foreign potentate" who had dared to do this thing. A quotation from *King John* did service on a thousand platforms and in a hundred leading articles. It was a base attempt to enslave free-born Protestant Britons. The Government of the day was called upon by all it held dear to fling back the insult and the degradation; and Lord John Russell brought in a Bill to declare the assumption of a territorial title by any Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church a penal offence.

Russel wanted to know what all the fuss was about. He would have none of it. He denounced the agitation, and especially he denounced the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. Who, he asked, would be a penny the worse for Roman Catholic prelates calling themselves Archbishop of Westminster or Bishop of Salford? The establishment of the hierarchy in England, he assumed, was regarded by the Pope as a matter of government within the Roman Catholic Church. It affected nobody but Roman Catholics. Nobody was obliged even to call Dr. Wiseman "Archbishop of Westminster." To resent what had been done was as absurd as to resent any minister being called the Moderator of the General Assembly.

The war was carried into the enemy's camp. Russel saw with clear vision that what is now called the "Nonconformist Conscience" was rampant. It affected, not Nonconformists alone, but Churchmen. It was not demanding freedom for itself. If it had been, Russel would have been on its side. It was demanding fetters for others with whose creed it did not agree. That was, is, and ever will be intolerable to the man who sincerely loves civil and religious liberty. It was intolerable to Russel, and in every publication of the *Scotsman*, then published twice a week, he inveighed against it—bore it down by force of argument, helped by shafts of ridicule. The paper suffered. Shoals of subscribers withdrew. But Russel stood firm, and he was backed by staunch, honest John Ritchie, then the sole proprietor of the paper.



How fully Russel was vindicated, everybody knows. The Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was passed. It was dead from the moment it received the Royal assent. The Roman Catholics never took the slightest notice of it. Nobody attempted to enforce it against them: to have done so would have been absurd. At last, in 1871, it was repealed as a tribute to common-sense and toleration. Who would dream of proposing such a measure now?

## CHAPTER XX

Russel and party ties—His views on Home Rule—His readiness to listen to argument—His contest with Mr. Duncan M'Laren—His views on "Working-manism"—Mr. Duncan M'Laren and the Whigs—"Independent Liberals"—Mr. M'Laren's action against the *Scotsman*—Presentation to Russel—His continuation of the contest—Reported reconciliation—The Annuity Tax agitation and Disestablishment—The Free Church—The Irish Church—Russel's dislike of narrow Voluntarism—His probable course in recent times.

WHAT has been written as to the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill is not only proof of Russel's love of toleration, and his fearlessness in the assertion of what he believed to be the truth ; it is proof that he was not, in the strict sense,—that is, in the thick-and-thin sense,—a party man. He believed in party. He saw that Parliamentary government, if it is to be efficient, must be party government. He had not the faintest belief in "groups." He was convinced that every man must make some compromise of private inclination or opinion at times. But he knew where to draw the line. In the case of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill he had every party inducement to support it. The Government was a Liberal Government of strong Whig proclivities. In most

things it had his energetic support. The alternative to it was a Government virtually under the direction of Mr. Disraeli; and Russel did not believe in Disraeli. Yet without hesitation he declared against Lord John Russell's Bill, and fought it from first to last. He was one of the comparatively few Liberals who maintained their Liberalism. He would not set party before principle.

On many occasions he let it be seen that he did not like the policy of a Government which, on the whole, he supported. With the utmost care, and often with caustic humour, he would indicate that its measures, or a particular measure, did not deserve support. He asserted his right to criticise his friends, and he showed that where he thought them utterly wrong he could and would break away from them. I know it has been said that if he had lived till 1886 he would have gone with Mr. Gladstone in proposing to give Home Rule to Ireland. I am sure he would not; and for two reasons. One is that he distrusted Mr. Gladstone and most of his Irish legislation. The other is that he never gave the slightest support to Home Rule demands when they were made in his time, but ridiculed and condemned them. Again and again have we talked over the subject, and always Russel denounced the Irish National movement.

On this point I have a piece of evidence which for many reasons may be interesting. In August 1874 Russel was staying at his country-house at Nenthorn. Almost daily, when he was not fishing,

he wrote letters to the office, and often—very often—sent in articles. About the 16th of August Home Rule demonstrations had been made in Glasgow, and Home Rule speeches of the usual kind had been delivered. One orator had asserted that Ireland under the Grattan Parliament had “prospered during the succeeding period as no nation in the world had ever prospered.” Another had with wonderful iteration sung the praises of Federalism. Russel wrote to me on the 17th of August, when the report of the demonstration had appeared in the papers, and this is what he wrote—

I thought to-day of writing on the Home Rule meetings, but felt it was scarcely worth while ; also, that you would very probably be anticipating me. If done at all, it should be done lightly and slightly. Note that “Federalism” is not Home Rule, but something more ; that Federalism is to do everything, including all municipal things, such as “sewerage” ; that if the “Independence” that began in ’82 made Ireland “prosper during the succeeding period as no nation in the world had ever prospered,” it was strange that Ireland should have rebelled during the “succeeding period” (’98) ; and that in France, etc., there certainly would have been no occasion to apply at this time for the release of the Fenian prisoners, as they would all have been shot or guillotined long ago, especially if Republicans had the rule.

An article on the subject had been written when that letter arrived ; and I remember that it met with Russel’s approval.

Let me add that there is scarcely a development of Irish Home Rule in these later days that Russel had not more or less directly considered and rejected—that is, when we were talking over the subject.



The person who can believe that Russel, with his strong common-sense, his genuine patriotism, his hatred of shams, and his love of well-ordered liberty, could or would ever have supported either of Mr. Gladstone's Bills, will believe anything. I think I can hear the words of scorn that would have come from him about the "Union of Hearts," and the like.

Let it be remembered that my object is to present Russel and his views as he and they were—as I knew them. All who know anything of the relations that must exist, or ought to exist, between the Editor of a great newspaper and his assistant will understand how closely Russel and myself discussed public questions and public men. It was not always my fortune to agree with him; but never did he show impatience of difference of opinion. On the contrary, he was always ready to argue, and to be convinced, if that was possible. He had a boisterous good-humoured way of meeting criticisms and differences. The voice would be loud, perhaps the language would be strong; but the eye would twinkle, and there would be a slight picking at his beard. Always, when he had an argument to combat or a phrase to shape, there came a knot on that beard, which was untied as the argument was met or the phrase rolled out.

On one occasion a complete difference of opinion arose between us as to the meaning of a passage in a public document. We argued without either being convinced he was wrong. In any case an article

had to be written on the document, and I proposed to write one, which he might manipulate as he chose, putting in nots instead of affirmatives if he thought fit. He agreed; the article was written; not a word in it was altered by him; and while professing to complain that I overruled him, Russel, it was clear, was convinced. Indeed he was the last man in the world to allow an article which he did not approve to appear in the paper.

Not long ago a writer who undertook to produce a sketch of Russel and his career said: "Perhaps Russel was occasionally forced into positions more Whiggish, as we now say, than he actually was himself by his antagonism to Mr. Duncan M'Laren, long M.P. for Edinburgh, and who represented a type of political thought in Scotland which had nothing of the broad and generous democratic spirit of to-day, but was a sort of reedy, acid, and *bourgeois* Radicalism which Russel could not stand." This passage is quoted here for several reasons closely personal to Russel. It seems to assume that he would have been in sympathy with what is called "the broad and generous democratic spirit of to-day"—that is, I presume, with what is commonly known as Advanced Radicalism. I venture to say Russel would have had no more liking for it than he had for the Radicalism of Mr. M'Laren. Before he died, active antagonism to Mr. M'Laren had passed away; but continuous combating of what Russel regarded as extreme opinions had not. Only a few weeks before he died he wrote and pub-

lished an article on what he spoke of as "Working-manism." In it he criticised, censured, and ridiculed the modern tendency to teach the working-man that his is the voice of the Deity, that he is the one great prop of the nation, and that for him there ought to be exceptional legislation, relieving him of taxes and endowing him with privileges. Though a Whig, Russel was always in favour of the Ballot, and in every direction he showed the earnestness and honesty of his Liberal opinions. But he absolutely refused to believe that a policy almost entirely destructive could be of benefit to the nation.

After he was dead, one of those who wrote a memoir of him said : "Like most political economists, he did not deal with questions from a humanitarian point of view, and defective sympathy made his writings on trades' unions and other working-class interests appear peculiarly hard and unfeeling." If this be correct—and in a certain sense it is correct—it goes far to refute the suggestion that Russel would have been in sympathy with "the broad and generous democratic spirit of to-day." It was because he thought the democratic spirit was "broad and generous" at other people's expense that he would have nothing to do with it. Freedom from restraints, no oppressive privileges, progressive improvement—these were the things he sought after and supported with all his strength. There was no "defective sympathy" with honest effort ; there was a resolute determination not to say a thing was good when he believed it to be bad. No man saw more clearly than

did Russel that you cannot raise the general level of the comfort of the people by class legislation. He was no more for giving privileges to working-men than he was for giving privileges to wealthy idlers. He spoke plainly. Of course many trade unionists and all "Advanced Radicals" did not like it. He did not write to please them: he wrote in the interests of what he believed to be the truth. It has never yet been held that to tell a man that a certain poisonous draught will injure him is "hard and unfeeling."

The more recent writer whom I have quoted is really unjust to Mr. Duncan M'Laren. The Radicalism that gentleman professed was not specially "reedy," or "acid," or "*bourgeois*." It was an attempt to combine some old Liberal principles with action of a destructive tendency. The "broad and generous democratic spirit" of to-day differs from it in that the pretence of old Liberal principles is thrown away, and the destructive tendency is all that remains.

It is impossible to deal with Russel's career without political reflections and comparisons. He differed from Mr. M'Laren because he believed him to be actuated by personal motives—personal dislikes on the one side, and a desire for personal aggrandisement on the other. It need not be doubted that Russel was unwilling to see the existing order of things disturbed. After the Reform Bill of 1832 the representation of Edinburgh and of Scotland generally had come into the hands of the



Whigs. I have never had any doubt they felt that what they had fought for and won ought to be and was theirs to enjoy. The patronage of office, whether local or national, and office itself were to be for them. They acted upon that view. My conviction is that they were in the main wise and prudent administrators, who used their power for the public good.

But there were many people who did not think that the earth was the Whigs', and the fulness thereof. Taking a foremost part among these dissentients was Mr. Duncan M'Laren. He proclaimed himself, or was proclaimed, the leader of a new party in Edinburgh which was to call itself the "Independent Liberal Party." It was to rally the people against the Whigs. Russel was opposed to it, and stood up for his friends. How he did stand up for them! Day by day, swashing blows were administered to the "Independents." All his life he hated the use of that word as a description of a man's politics. He has said to me—"When a man calls himself an independent politician it means that he is independent of common-sense, and generally of common honesty."

It was in this spirit that he fought the "Independent Liberal Party," and Mr. M'Laren its head. For years the fight went on, and not many days passed without an article in the *Scotsman* belabouring Mr. M'Laren with cudgels of humour and hard argument. That gentleman was as pugnacious as Russel. He had no wit, nor a grain of humour. He might have been the Mr. Gradgrind of Dickens's

story. He was indefatigably industrious. He loved to pile up statistics. It was indeed a curious feature of the long gladiatorial contest that both combatants loved figures. Russel could illuminate them with humour : Mr. M'Laren could not. All the same, they flung them at each other without hesitation and without stint.

A strong light will be cast upon Russel's character and methods by a little closer examination of his quarrel with Mr. M'Laren. Before joining the *Scotsman*, Russel had been invited by Mr. M'Laren to write papers for the Anti-Corn Law League. I believe that while he was at Cupar he had written an essay on Free Trade which had gained a prize given by the League, and had brought him to the notice of Cobden. Probably this was why he was approached by Mr. M'Laren. The request that he would write for the League was coupled with a further request that he would attack the *Scotsman*. Let it be repeated that this was before Russel came to Edinburgh. It is not difficult to understand the reason why Mr. M'Laren wanted the *Scotsman* to be attacked. It was cautious on the subject of Free Trade ; rather, it was cautious as to the Anti-Corn Law League. It had no doubt about Free Trade ; it had doubt as to the methods of the League. Mr. M'Laren was on perfectly friendly terms with his namesake, the Editor of the paper. He had been a frequent contributor. In after-life he used to point with pride to a portrait of himself which he had paid for with the money received by him for

contributions to the *Scotsman* before there was any quarrel. Being on these terms with the Editor, he yet asked young Russel to attack the paper. Russel refused, and it may be that here was the groundwork of the subsequent strong antagonism of the two men.

In 1852 a general election took place. A few years before, in 1847, Macaulay, who had represented the city, had been defeated by Mr. Charles Cowan on a No-Popery cry. Macaulay would not refuse to vote for the Maynooth Grant, and all that was narrow and bigoted in Edinburgh was arrayed against him. Mr. Cowan, a worthy man in himself, was the chosen champion of the No-Popery party, and he won the election. In 1852 Macaulay was brought forward again. Mr. Cowan also presented himself, and there were two Conservatives. Mr. M'Laren was Lord Provost of the city at the time, and he too came forward as a candidate. This irritated the friends of Mr. Cowan. They knew that the city had repented its rejection of Macaulay and would now return him; and they regarded Mr. M'Laren's candidature as an attempt to oust their man. Perhaps it was: the question is not worth pursuing. What is certainly true is that some of the Cowanites became very bitter.

One of these Cowanites was Sir William Johnston, who had been Lord Provost of the city. On 15th June 1852 he wrote a letter to Mr. M'Laren, and took care that the letter was published. In it he described a speech by Mr. M'Laren as a

"miserably shuffling address," and accused him of making "false and slanderous" statements, and of uttering "gross untruths." He had, he said, been frequently told that Mr. M'Laren was "a dangerous person to have anything to do with," but had not expected to have practical experience of the fact. Finally, he said, "I hope my fellow-citizens may learn something from this little incident, and take care that they, too, do not take into their bosom the *cold little snake* that may turn round and bite them."

This phrase was caught up by the public, and in election squibs Mr. M'Laren was derided and denounced as "Snake the Draper," and the like. The *Scotsman* did not thus deride him. It was for Macaulay first, but of the other candidates it thought Mr. M'Laren the best. Russel was not very warm in his support, but he was distinctly more favourable to Mr. M'Laren than to Mr. Cowan. The reason was not far to seek. Mr. Cowan's sin of 1847 was not forgiven. It was not that Russel distrusted Mr. M'Laren less, but that he disliked Mr. Cowan more. That relative feeling changed in after-years. Mr. Cowan was elected: Mr. M'Laren was defeated.

In 1856 Macaulay resigned, and his friends in Edinburgh brought forward Mr. Adam Black for the vacant seat. The Independent Liberal party was in arms. All the opponents of the Whig party were in arms. They met, and conferred, and finally chose Mr. Francis Brown Douglas, an advocate and a Free Churchman, as their champion. All the



differences of 1852 were forgotten. Mr. M'Laren had then called Mr. Brown Douglas a "calumniator," and had spoken of him as "dishonourable." They fraternised in 1856; Mr. M'Laren was Mr. Brown Douglas's chief supporter. Sir William Johnston joined with Mr. M'Laren. The Conservatives—at least their representatives—supported the "Independent Liberal." The newspapers—Conservative and Liberal—with the sole exception of the *Scotsman*, were against Mr. Black. Russel had to fight them all single-handed, and he did so with characteristic vigour.

Naturally he made the most of the previous disagreements among the new allies. He twitted them with their former abuse of each other. Alluding to Sir William Johnston's description of Mr. M'Laren as a "cold little snake," he wrote that at a meeting of Mr. Brown Douglas's nominators there was present "every creature known in the political world—Mammalia, Aves, Pisces, and Reptilia"; and, he added, "as for the *Viperidæ*, what could be a more delightful object of Christian contemplation than Sir William Johnston and Mr. Duncan M'Laren lovingly intertwining the folds of their affections, no longer with anything 'cold' between them?" In all the leading articles of the period there was but one other allusion to the "snake" description; but one article was brought to a close with a sentence exposing a misstatement by Mr. M'Laren as to the number of spirit dealers who had signed the requisition to Mr. Black.

Russel said there was in that statement an error of 90 per cent, "which," he added, "is very remarkable in the case of a gentleman who is, like Iago,—*very* like Iago,—‘a great arithmetician.’" Finally there were squibs in the paper in which allusion was made to the "snake," the strongest being one headed "The Unholy Alliance."

During the whole of the contest the "Independent Liberal" papers were notably abusive of Mr. Black and the *Scotsman*. They flung accusations against both broadcast. Of course they accused Russel of indulging in personalities. This brought from him a statement which I quote, because it seems to me to describe with strict accuracy his principle of controversy, not only in this particular case, but in all cases. On the eve of the election he wrote—

When men are acting in common without having any principle in common—when no man among them can utter an opinion without upsetting the confederate seated on his right hand and on his left—when every shot made of political material aimed at an enemy certainly puts to flight a friend—it is natural that they should seek to employ themselves in personal topics, such as the ascription to opponents of private and sinister motives. Now a preliminary word on this subject of personality. Some dull-minded people sometimes speak of ourselves as indulging in personalities; but the truth is, that, many and hot as have been the contests, in which we have taken our humble share, we never uttered, nor permitted others to utter, a personality against even the most odious opponent. A personality, as we understand it, is the importing into a controversy on public questions, the private affairs, the personal peculiarities, or the supposable sordid motives of the persons engaged in the conflict. The freest and sharpest comment on everything a man says or does in reference

to public matters is not personality, though it may be either just or unjust, in good taste or in bad taste ; but to attack a man in his private feelings, failings, and concerns, merely because he takes an adverse course in public matters, *is* "personality," and an outrage of which we never were guilty, art or part.

Then he applied this principle as illustrated in his comments upon Mr. M'Laren :

For instance [he wrote], there is no man of whom, though we would it had been otherwise, we have had to say harder things than of Mr. Duncan M'Laren—at this moment, not insidiously, but to his teeth, we charge him with deserting principles, and traducing his friends, and deceiving enemies, and acting only for his own purposes, and especially his own malignities ; but we speak on no other data than his own public speakings, writings, and actings. As to his having private or meaner personal motives either in this or in any former transaction, there are those among his present followers who know that not long ago we refused to allow the slightest vent to accusations of that sort, which went to the public through other channels now choking with his praise ; and we are most willing to add, though denying the relevancy of the subject, that Mr. M'Laren is far removed from sordid motives, and that his private qualities contrast very favourably with his public.

One more passage from the last article, written after the poll had been declared, may be excused :

We hold and deliberately act upon the doctrine that, if a blow is not foul, the harder it is put in the better.

Mr. Black was returned by a large majority. It was a great victory for the *Scotsman*, and Russel rejoiced, it may be, in a rather boisterous fashion. Then it was that Mr. M'Laren brought an action against the proprietor of the *Scotsman*, and against Russel. He founded his case on the squib

"An Unholy Alliance" on passages in articles relating to the "snake" name, and generally on a charge that the paper had sought to bring him into contempt. A jury, largely composed of "Independent Liberals," gave Mr. M'Laren £400 damages. He gave the money as a capital sum to the Heriot schools, the interest to be applied to the purchase of Bibles for the scholars. It may be here recalled that when, many years afterwards, the Heriot schools were put under a new scheme of management, against which Mr. M'Laren had strenuously fought, he suggested that the £400 ought to be placed again at his disposal. His suggestion was not adopted.

After the verdict in the action just described, many friends of the *Scotsman* subscribed to pay the damages and costs. I believe this subscription was opposed by Mr. Findlay and by Mr. Russel, both of whom thought it would be derogatory to the dignity of the paper to accept it. But Mr. John Ritchie, the proprietor, did not take that view. He urged that the action and resultant damages and costs were due to the fight the *Scotsman* had made for the Liberal party, and that therefore it was proper for members of the party to pay the bill if they thought fit to do so.

Two or three years later, Russel's friends and admirers took a further step. In May 1859 a meeting was held in Edinburgh, at which Sir William Gibson Craig moved, and Mr. Moncreiff (subsequently Lord Moncreiff) seconded, a resolution declaring that Mr. Russel, "by his able, consistent,



and powerful advocacy of enlightened political principles, having largely contributed to the diffusion of sound Liberal opinions in Scotland, a testimonial be presented to him in recognition of these services to the community, and as a mark of respect for his honourable and independent conduct in public and private life." The resolution was carried without hesitation ; a subscription was begun, and before many weeks were over almost every man of note on the Liberal side of politics had subscribed. A sum of £1770 was thus raised. It was spent in silver plate, which was presented to Mr. Russel at a public gathering in the Waterloo Rooms.

It is not to be supposed that the kindness of his friends diverted Russel's attention from Mr. M'Laren. Russel was a good hater ; I suspect Mr. M'Laren ran him close in that respect. Anyway, Russel lost no opportunity of attacking and ridiculing his opponent. He made opportunities. Mr. M'Laren was active in all municipal matters. He had been Lord Provost, as we have seen, and had once tried to be elected to represent Edinburgh in the House of Commons. He was beaten at the time, but subsequently he was successful. At every step Russel opposed and harassed him. I have a strong suspicion that Mr. M'Laren did not greatly object to the attacks that were incessantly made. I do not mean that he liked being ridiculed and laughed at for itself ; but I fancy he had no objection to it as helping him forward in the career he sought for himself. " The blood of the martyrs is the seed

of the Church." Russel was for ever making a martyr of Mr. M'Laren. Once, some four or five years before Russel died, he and I were talking about the conflict that had long been going on between them.

"You have made a mistake," I said; "you have pursued M'Laren and made a martyr of him."

"Confound you," was the reply; "what would you have done?"

"I would have given M'Laren credit when he did anything good, and thus have given strength to censures of what he did wrong."

"But, confound it, he never did anything good in his life. There was nothing to praise."

The argument went on, upon these lines, until at last Russel said, with a good deal of pathetic force, "Cooper, you don't know what that man has done. You do not know the way in which he has sought to undermine those to whom he was opposed, and to serve his own personal ends. If you knew all, you would like him as little as I do."

It has been assumed that between the two there was reconciliation. It is true they shook hands in the lobby of the House of Commons. It is true that at the election of 1874 the *Scotsman* supported the return of Mr. M'Laren. It is not true that Russel's dislike of his ancient enemy had ceased. I shall not readily forget the difficulty we had to induce Russel to allow the paper to support Mr. M'Laren. The old controversies had worn themselves out. New issues were springing up. Old

opponents in the Liberal army had drawn nearer to each other. Still Russel was well-nigh obdurate, and only yielded with a protest. As for the hand-shaking in the lobby, a sentence from a letter written by Russel in London, in April 1876, immediately after the "reconciliation," may give an idea of his feelings as to the episode :

*Entre nous*, the gracious Duncan came to me in the lobby last night, made a pretty little speech, and insisted on shaking hands. More when we meet.

The "more" was not praise of Mr. M'Laren.

One of the features of the long war between the two was the ingenuity with which Russel, after the libel action, contrived to repeat the cause of offence without infringing the law. On one occasion Mr. Disraeli had written a letter to Mr. M'Laren which praised that gentleman. It was published by him, and Russel criticised it. He began his article with these words: "When the Hebrew prophet raised the brazen serpent high." All the country laughed.

Another time there had been a demonstration of statistics by Mr. M'Laren. Russel wrote on the subject and said, though it was not legally permissible to speak of Mr. M'Laren as a snake, there could be no doubt he was a great "adder." At another time some exposure was made of more or less secret doings, in which Mr. M'Laren as a politician was concerned. "We all along thought there was something in the grass," commented Russel.

So the contest—if it can be called a contest

—went on. The £400 damages awarded to Mr. M'Laren could scarcely compensate him for the subsequent years of rough journalistic usage that he received at the hands of Russel. As I have said, I suspect he did not greatly regret that usage. It got him into the House of Commons, and it kept him there. Before he died I saw a good deal of him. He was the brother-in-law of John Bright. They had both in earlier years been associated in great popular movements, beginning with the Anti-Corn Law agitation. Russel was as strong a Free Trader as Mr. M'Laren. They differed less because of Mr. M'Laren's Radicalism than because of his local action. The Annuity Tax, which he sought to overthrow, never had Russel's support on its merits. He had opposed it and worked for its repeal. But he opposed the later movement on the subject because he believed it was dishonestly directed, and he did not think good could come of anything that was dishonest.

It is no part of my desire to enter into any of the controversies of the time ; but it is impossible to do justice, or anything like justice, to Russel and his position as Editor of the *Scotsman* without straying some way in that direction. Thus the mention of the Annuity Tax agitation suggests the question—What position would Russel have taken up in regard to the movement of late years for the Disestablishment of the Church of Scotland? He was not an upholder of Church Establishments. For many years he was a constant attender at the Broughton



Place United Presbyterian Church, of which the Rev. Dr. John Brown was the minister. The United Presbyterian Church is based on Voluntarism, and I know that Russel did not believe in the maintenance of an Established Church. But he saw the Church in existence. He knew her history. No man was better acquainted with ecclesiastical politics in Scotland than he was. I am convinced that while he would have been satisfied to see the Church of Scotland disestablished by a great movement based upon principle, he would never have given support to an attack on the Church that he believed to be due to narrow jealousy or shabby personal ambitions. The whole course of his conduct throughout the Annuity Tax agitation justifies this opinion.

It should be remembered that Russel had no love for the Free Church. I do not believe that any man more thoroughly admired and respected the convictions of some of the leaders of the Disruption. But he did not love the subsequent leaders. It is not necessary here to even attempt to analyse or explain his dislike of or objection to them. It is enough to state the fact. He sharply criticised them. He refused to accept what he regarded as their priestly assumptions. He denied that they had any monopoly of virtue or wisdom or true religion. In his time the Free Church through its Assembly had not declared for Disestablishment. It has done so now, though Establishment is writ large in its Standards. If any one can believe that

Russel would have supported a Disestablishment crusade with the Free Church as leader, he can have no difficulty in accepting the story of Baron Munchausen's adventures as literally true.

Russel supported the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, not merely on the ground of Religious Equality, but on the ground that it was a Church imposed upon Ireland, teaching doctrines which the vast majority of the Irish people did not believe. In his opinion, Ireland for its good was joined to Great Britain; but he did not think that therefore British institutions must of necessity be thrust upon the Irish people. He thought that the Irish Church was less likely to be regarded as a sacred and venerable institution than as the outward and visible mark of conquest. It is not probable that he wholly trusted Mr. Gladstone in the matter of the Disestablishment of the Church; but he knew that the question was taken up by the Liberal party in whole-hearted sincerity. He could not have found much similarity between the movement then as to the Irish Church and the movement now against the Church of Scotland.

No man disliked more strongly than did Russel, what he thought the narrow and intolerant views of those who took a prominent part in Voluntary, that is Disestablishment, movements. He seemed to think that they regarded themselves not merely as the salt of the earth, but as the only possible salt. He thought that they not only assumed to be virtuous themselves, but denied that others were

or could be virtuous. They were—some of them—in earnest; but he regarded their very earnestness as a danger. It was more to be respected than the insincerity of others who were ranged on the same side; but it was a danger to toleration. Therefore he wrote against it and used all his humour and argumentative power in combating it. That he was successful cannot be doubted.

It is incredible that Russel would have had respect in these days for men and methods that he opposed when he lived. For let it be remembered, he was actuated mainly by principle. He might dislike this man or that and distrust him; but he did not judge a great question on narrow personal grounds—certainly not on any personal grounds by themselves. But he had great regard for methods. He did not believe that if you planted thorns you would gather grapes.

It is an interesting fact that in Great Britain, until a comparatively recent date, honours have not been showered upon newspaper men. It is otherwise in France and several other countries. There the newspaper is often the path to high appointments, and to honours of more or less value. Personally I prefer the British way, just as I prefer the British civil service to every other institution of the kind in the world, and for some of the same reasons. Neither newspaper conductor nor civil servant ought to be dependent on the smiles or frowns of a Minister; nor should either have any inducement to court the smiles. No one has a higher

respect for dignities that flow from the Crown than I have ; but I am convinced that no newspaper man in active work ought to accept one. Those who think differently may do so with perfect honesty. To me it seems that as such honours come through the Minister of the day, they may be regarded both by him and the world generally as rewards for party services rendered. It is not in the interests of honestly independent journalism that such a view should find support in the acceptance of dignities by men whose only apparent claim to them is that they have owned or edited newspapers that had supported the party through whose hands the honours are bestowed. No doubt this is entirely a matter of opinion : I simply state mine.

But there are honours which are avowedly recognitions either of political services well rendered, or of literary or journalistic eminence. These can never be misinterpreted as bribes. One such honour was conferred on Russel. In April 1875 he was elected a member of the Reform Club by nomination and without ballot. The Committee of the Club had then and have now the power of electing two members each year on the ground of distinguished service to the Liberal party. In 1869 Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville were thus elected, and in subsequent years the Marquis of Hartington (now Duke of Devonshire), Earl Spencer, Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Cardwell, the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Westminster, and Lord Odo Russell had been chosen. No election was made



in 1874; but in 1875, Russel was placed on the roll of members of the Club. Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Caird, who had moved the election, was the first to congratulate Russel. No man could have been more pleased than Russel himself. He spoke to us of what had been done. He wrote to his friends on the subject. Yet he had grave doubts whether announcement of the honour done to him should be made in the *Scotsman*. I had no doubt that, if only as a matter of news, it must be made. In a letter to Mr. Law he wrote that he had yielded to my pressure, and that he had done so with much misgiving.

## CHAPTER XXI

Russel's early experience in writing—Disparagement of quick writing—Number of articles per day—Russel and literature—His style—His careful guarding of statements—Mr. Gladstone and his Cabinet—Russel's use of humour—Illustration, not mere joking—Russel and imagination—The subjects he delighted in—His inability to praise—His appropriation of credit of articles—Quicker journalism—Spontaneity of Russel's humour—Anecdotes—Russel known on the country-side—His use of quotations—Memory's betrayal—A closing interview—Mr. J. R. Findlay's reminiscences of Russel.

WHEN Alexander Russel began to edit a newspaper there was no pressure upon him as to time or otherwise. His first efforts were in connection with papers published once a week. When he joined the *Scotsman* it was published twice a week. He was not greatly troubled with quick posts or many telegrams. Indeed, until long afterwards he could write at comparative leisure on a subject that he had considered for hours or even days. He had no fear of further news before his eyes—news that might require an alteration of what he was writing. One result of this was that he got into the habit of thinking that the leading article of to-day might be—if it was not all the better for being—on the subject of the day before yesterday.

The change of publication to a daily issue did not make much difference to him in this respect. He wrote every day for some time ; but he had all the day in which to write.

It has sometimes occurred to me to speculate upon what Russel would have been if he had entered newspaper life thirty years later than he did. Would he have been, either as Editor or as writer, as marked a personality as he was in his time? Would he have adapted himself to the more pressing requirements of modern journalism? As to this second question I am inclined to think he would not. Ten years before he died, the pressure was increasing week by week ; and he did not like it. He was not a quick writer in the ordinary sense, and he did not care to be pushed. He did not like the idea of writing late at night on the event of the evening, and it was long before he could be reconciled to it. He would complain in later days that his "topic" had been taken from him by a writer on the previous night. Perhaps it was a debate in Parliament or an incident in the House of Commons that he would have liked to write about in leisurely fashion next day. Some writer had taken up the topic the night of the debate or incident, and Russel found an article on it when he opened his paper in the morning. He objected to this. I am pretty sure he did not think it good journalism. I am certain he thought it militated against good writing and sound thinking.

That was the natural feeling of a man who

had never, or very rarely, written under pressure. Nothing is more common than for some slow-witted people to disparage the day-to-day writing in newspapers. They cannot write or think except with an effort; and they stamp as poor and ineffectual anything that is produced quickly. Their standard of merit of an article is the length of time taken in the writing of it. They require many hours to do what another man can do in one hour; how is it possible for his article to be as good as theirs? Not only is it possible, it is almost certain that the quickly written article will be the better. As a rule your slow writer is a dull thinker, and you cannot get much that is good from such a source. There may be wit in him somewhere, to be developed perhaps with artificial stimulants, or with much midnight oil; but there are certainly slowness and dulness.

No one will imagine that I am in the least identifying Russel with these slow-witted people who find in their slowness a cause of self-gratulation. Assuredly he was not slow-witted. No more nimble wit could have been found. My desire is to vindicate him from the implied charge of the slow men that he was one of their number. He was not. I do not believe that if he had been in active newspaper life now he would have stood out as he did in his own time; but he would never have been a slow thinker, though he might have been a comparatively slow writer. His objection to articles written rapidly sprang from the habits of his early news-



paper life. He objected to more than one article in a single issue of the paper ; and he always moaned—it might be partly in joke—when, with his consent, more than one appeared. It was not any dislike of the second article in itself, it was the feeling that there ought not to be more than one article. No doubt this feeling had its origin in the practice of past times. One article was enough in the early daily days, for two reasons. First, there was no telegraphic crowding of news ; second, there was only one writer available—the Editor himself. Of course there were contributors ; but I suspect they were then what they are now, irregular folk, that is, irregular in their offers of help. The Editor had to rely upon himself in the main, and of course he came to think that one leading article was enough. One is always enough, if there be no more than one subject to which it is desirable to call public attention. If there be more than one subject, there should be more than one article. Russel came to see this, and made no objections when the number of articles was increased.

Part of the reason given for Russel's comparatively slow writing has been that he had a fine literary taste, and that he insisted that his leading columns should have a high literary character. I do not believe the suggestion will bear examination. It is true that Russel had a wide and deep acquaintance with English literature. Of course he could not like illiterate articles ; only a fool or an ignoramus would. But I do not believe he cared much for

literary form. He cared for ideas, and he liked what he used to speak of as "good phrasing." If there were no ideas in an article he despised it, though it might be written with elegance. Forceful thought was what he wanted; and he had no care for dandified literature.

As a matter of fact Russel's own style was anything but elegant. He wrote long sentences with many parentheses. Once I said to him, "Why are you so parenthetical in your writing?" "What do you mean?" he asked. "I mean that you introduce into most of your sentences a parenthetical passage or two." "You mean to say that I write involved sentences?" "No, I do not, in the ordinary sense. Your sentences are involved, but no one can mistake their meaning. What I am pointing to is your habit of parenthesis." "Well," he said, "it is true; you are right. I got into the habit during the Free Trade times. If I made a statement then, the other side took it up and distorted it, and I got into the way of carefully guarding all I said."

No better explanation of his style could be given. Those who take note of the utterances of careful statesmen will find that they never fail to introduce qualifying words or passages into their statements. It is the caution of the man accustomed to controversy. I suppose no one ever illustrated it more completely than Mr. Gladstone. It would be difficult to take up any statement made by him, and to say with absolute assurance what it meant. One of his colleagues in the Cabinet of 1880-85 told me

that on a certain occasion a difficulty arose at a Council meeting. If I remember aright it was in connection with Egyptian affairs. Mr. Gladstone had made a statement in the House of Commons which was interpreted in a particular way. The Opposition raised questions, and the development of affairs in Egypt convinced the Government that the position previously taken up could not be maintained.

At the Cabinet Council, Mr. Gladstone proposed that he should make to the House a statement which he described.

"You cannot do that," said another member of the Cabinet, with the manifest assent of the other Ministers, "you said so and so (the opposite) the other day."

"I don't think I said that," Mr. Gladstone replied.

"Yes, you certainly did," was the general declaration.

"I do not think I did; let us send for the *Times*."

The *Times* was sent for; the report of what Mr. Gladstone had said was referred to, and then it was found that there were qualifying words which deprived the statement of the definite meaning that had been attached to it.

Russel's qualifications never went so far as this; they never enabled him to appear to be saying one thing while he wished to be understood as saying something else. He said what he meant, and his qualifications had no other object than that of making his meaning clearer and less liable to be

misunderstood. But I never knew a man editorially connected with a newspaper who troubled himself less with the form or more with the substance of what was written. "There you go down into the dirt, the whole dozen of you," was the opening part of the opening sentence of a triumphant article just after Mr. Brown Douglas's election, in which the "Independent Liberals" had been beaten. It was followed by a string of names—as "Mackenzieites, M'Larenites," etc., who had gone "down into the dirt." Everybody knew what it meant; nobody could praise it for literary taste. It was but one instance of many. Let an article have ideas, with even a suspicion of humour, and it satisfied Russel.

At one time we had a contributor, a minister in Fife, who wrote articles that were almost grotesquely humorous. It was impossible not to laugh at them. Many people—foolish people—thought they were written by Russel. He was not altogether pleased at this; but he could take no step to disillusionise the mistaken ones. He saw and knew the difference between the articles and his own. One day when we were talking about them and their writer, Russel said, "I saw Hill Burton to-day, and he was speaking of D——'s articles. He said he knew they were not mine. They were very funny, but they were funny for fun's sake. 'When you are humorous,' he said, 'you are humorous for a serious purpose; you want to enforce a serious lesson; that writer cares nothing for the lesson, but everything for the fun.'"



It would be difficult to give a better description of Russel's use of humour. Often have I felt irritation when people have spoken of him as if he were a buffoon who grinned through a horse-collar to win the laughter of the gallery. He was nothing of the kind. Sometimes people have said that "Scotland roared at his sallies." It is a coarse and inaccurate way of saying that Scotsmen, who keenly appreciate humour, were amused and interested by his writing. There would be no inaccuracy in saying that Russel's humour was at times rough : it never was mere fooling. He did not always touch his opponent with a rapier ; but he touched him in such a way that if that opponent had common-sense and temper it would improve him even though he felt some irritation.

One writer on Russel discovered that he had no imagination. Such a statement seems to me to show that the man who made it suffered from literary blindness. I am not sure that I know exactly what he meant. I do not believe that Russel could have written an epic poem, or pastoral verses, or love-lorn sonnets ; I am sure he would have had extreme difficulty in producing a novel. But to say that he was devoid of imagination is silly. No matter how hard were the facts with which he might be dealing, he illumined them with his imagination. Unless it is to be held that there is no connection between imagination and humour, the charge against him disproves itself. A sense of humour is not necessarily a part of

the imaginative faculty, but imagination is part of humour. It has been said that no man more strongly illustrated the imaginative faculty than did Mr. Gladstone in his financial expositions. No sneer was implied: the statement was sober truth. Russel showed his imagination in the same way, and with like subjects. He delighted in figures, not as mere dry facts, but as indications of many things not always visible to the ordinary eye. In no instance was this better illustrated than in his contest with Mr. Duncan M'Laren. That gentleman, as I have before said, was fond of statistics. But a column of figures was a column of figures to him, "and it was nothing more." To Russel it was much more, and he made it much more to those who read his exposition of it.

When I was coming to Edinburgh a friend who had served the *Scotsman* for many years, and who knew Russel well, said to me—"Let me give you a word of caution. Never offer to write on Board of Trade Returns or National Finance, or statistics of any kind. Russel regards all these things as his own, and he would resent your coming in." This advice troubled me a little; for it seemed to indicate that Russel was a jealous man. As a matter of fact he was, in regard to the paper. He was not fond of intrusions into his domain, or what he regarded as his domain. He looked askance at articles by his colleagues that seemed to touch his subjects. He rarely bestowed commendation on any worker. One day we were talking together as

to the merits of work that had been done by one of the staff, and I suggested that Russel should say a few words of commendation to him. "Man," was the reply, "I can't. I can't praise anybody; I never could." This was very nearly the truth, but it was not exactly true. He could and did give praise of his co-workers to third persons; now and then he said a word of praise in a shamefaced way to a man himself. But it was plainly uncongenial to him. My impression always was that the inability to praise arose in the main from a constitutional shyness as to certain things. It is sometimes an impertinence to give praise: Russel, I fancy, thought it almost always an impertinence.

Still there was a strong leaven of jealousy in him. He did not care to hear praise of articles that he had not written. When such praise was bestowed in his hearing, he accepted it for himself. The assumption of the praiser always was that Russel had written the article under discussion. Very likely he had not; but he never allowed the praise to go past himself. I have sat at the same table with him many times and heard a particular article praised as his. "Nobody but yourself could have written that article, Russel," somebody would say. Or, "We can all see your hand in that article." Perhaps Russel would give me a look, but not a word would he say by way of disclaimer, though it might be and very commonly was the fact that he had never seen the article till it appeared in the paper. So far I think he had a certain justification.

An article in a newspaper ceases to be an individual pronouncement. The Editor is responsible for it, and he ought not to let the world know by whom it is written. But this is scarcely the point of the position taken up by Russel. He did not discourage the perhaps natural and certainly vulgar curiosity as to the writer of an article. He let it be assumed that he was that writer. If he had simply desired to baffle curiosity, he might have done what he did; but he took a like course when he had no such excuse. It is no exaggeration to say that in the later years of his life more than half the articles in the *Scotsman* popularly attributed to him were the productions of others.

The warning my London friend gave me when I was coming to Edinburgh kept me away for a short time from writing on statistical subjects; but soon I took them up, and before long they fell mainly into my hands. The reason was obvious and simple. If there was any importance in Board of Trade Returns it was desirable to have that importance indicated at the earliest moment. Nothing was to be gained, so far as the paper was concerned, by delay. No doubt it might be held that Russel, a day later, would make the importance of the Returns clearer than I could. But the answer to such a proposition is that if I did not make the matter quite clear to-day he could complete the process to-morrow. As a matter of fact, Russel did not find it necessary to go over the ground again; and thus Budgets, Statistical Returns, and the like



were as regularly dealt with by me as they had been by Russel.

This did not come about quite silently. He did not pretend to like it. His objection was that he should be deprived of the topic. He cried out inside the office ; but he soon saw that if the paper was to keep in the front rank it must deal more rapidly with public events than it had done. He was not so foolish as some people who seem to think that quickness spells inaccuracy. Possibly he may have thought at first that there was in quick writing a danger of the paper being committed to some course that would have to be retraced ; though I do not believe he did. In any case, if he was troubled with such a fear he speedily lost it.

Much has been said of Russel's humour. It was a delight to every one who knew him, and to every one who made acquaintance with it in what he wrote. Sometimes it has occurred to me to think that the best of Russel's humour was not shown in his writings. It was more artificial there than it was in his conversation. As he wrote with much preparation, the humour was prepared. In talk it was spontaneous. It bubbled out of him. An excellent instance of this is afforded in a story which has been told and mistold pretty often.

One day I went to his room for some purpose. He sat at his desk facing the door. As I opened it the light must have struck rather strongly upon my hair, fast growing gray. He, who was bald, put up his glasses and said, "Man, Cooper, how

white you're getting." Passing my fingers through my hair, I replied, "At any rate, there's plenty of it." "Oh," came the retort, "mine preferred death to dishonour." There was no preparation in that case.

Innumerable instances of a like kind could be given. His conversation at the dinner-table was ever bright with humorous gems, that never were prepared. It has been told of some diners-out that before leaving home they took a selection of stories from their commonplace book and led up to them during the evening. Russel had no commonplace book of that kind. I do not believe a joke or a story at a dinner-table was in his mind five minutes before it was given out. On one occasion I saw this spontaneity of humour and wit strikingly demonstrated. I was at a dinner party at which Russel, W. B. Hodgson, Professor of Political Economy at the Edinburgh University, Mr. (now Sir) Arthur Mitchell, and one or two others were present. Hodgson was a great story-teller, and, in that respect, most amusing. He and Russel told stories all the evening; but there was the widest difference between them. Hodgson's stories were proofs of his possession of a good memory of books: Russel's were purely spontaneous. They came from him with a delightful freshness that brought complete enjoyment to those of us who listened.

Sometimes Russel got the worst of an encounter of wits—never, I should say, if the encounter were with adults; with youngsters anything may happen.

One Friday afternoon he was going to Tweedside to fish, and had taken his seat in the train at the Waverley Station when a news-boy came along. "*Scotsman*, sir," said he, offering a paper to Russel. "Is it to-day's?" was asked. "Yes." "That is no use to me; I'll give you sixpence for to-morrow's *Scotsman*." "Here you are, sir," said the lad; and he pulled out a *Weekly Scotsman*, which, though dated Saturday, was issued on Friday. Russel had to pay the sixpence.

There is another story in connection with him that may be excused if given here. His handwriting was detestable. Few but those who were accustomed to it could make it out. A domestic servant who had been in Russel's employment had married a discharged soldier, who was, at a later time, wanting work. His wife asked Russel if he could not get something for her husband to do; and good-naturedly he pressed Mr. Law to give the man work if any opportunity arose in the office. At last a vacancy came for a reading-boy—the unfortunate being who has to read "copy" to the proof-reader. Mr. Law sent for Russel's man, who came in due course. Could he read? was asked. Yes, he could. Could he read writing as well as printed matter? Yes; he could read anything. "Can you read that?" asked Mr. Law, putting into his hand a page of Russel's manuscript. The poor man looked at it, turned it upside down, glanced at it in all ways, and then put it down on the table with a bang. "The fellow that wrote

that," said he, "will never make his living by his writing."

Little has been said of Russel's out-door life ; yet not to know what it was would be to leave a great part of him unknown. He loved angling, and of course he loved hills and streams everywhere. Very rarely was he in town for a whole week. (I am speaking of later years ; but I believe it would also be true to a large extent of the earlier days of his connection with the *Scotsman*.) "The meditative man's recreation" had unceasing charms for him. He knew all the Border country, and was known in it, for he spent almost every hour of leisure on its streams. Beyond doubt the excellence of his work was to some extent due to his love of angling. He could and did think over public questions and particular phrases while he was casting his flies. No one came near him at such a time to be received with a frown. Always a joke or a story was ready, and there would be laughter and good-fellowship. Not to this man alone or to that did he confine his talk. He spoke to everybody, and spoke to each as if he had known him all his life. "That is the way to get information," he said to me one day in the country when he had stopped for a "crack" with an agricultural labourer ; "you always get something out of such men."

"I suppose you do not know them all?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "I know very few of them ; but they know me." And then he told how on one occasion when he had been to "the Nest" on an



angling trip, and was driving to Galashiels, he heard a voice crying, "Russel! Russel!" He looked about and he saw that the shout came from a ploughman who was at work in a field past which he was driving. The man pulled up his horses, left his ploughstils, ran down to the roadside hedge, and asked over it, "How is the Irish Church Bill getting on?" I wonder where else in all the wide world an Editor of a great newspaper would have been accosted in like manner, or asked such a question by a peasant.

There are some writers in newspapers whose chief armoury seems to be a Dictionary of Quotations. Russel wanted no help of the kind. He was not much given to quotations by way of illustration; but when he did quote he drew upon a well-stored memory. At one time Edinburgh had for a very prominent Town Councillor, Mr. David Lewis. He was an "Independent Liberal"—perhaps he was more. Anyway, Russel liked neither his politics nor his methods. At last Mr. Lewis accepted a post as Treasurer to the Heriot Trust, and he described his post as his "political coffin." He did not refrain from public agitation, however, and Russel called him to order with these lines:

"Lie still, if you're wise,  
You'll be damned if you rise."

Where did he get those lines?

On another occasion I had a curious exemplification of his store of poetic knowledge, and of the untrustworthiness of memory in the case of quota-

tion. He went to Egypt to the opening of the Suez Canal, and wrote several descriptive letters. In them were many quotations, which he asked me to verify. They were all right in sense; they were full of verbal errors.

Once I had another curious instance of this untrustworthiness of memory as to quotations. When the Revised New Testament appeared, it was sent for review to an extremely able minister of the Church of Scotland. He wrote the review, and in the course of it compared many passages in the New Version with the like passages in the Old Version. When I read the proof I found an error in a quotation from the Old Book. This made me look closer, and I then found that out of forty or fifty such quotations, not one was verbally correct. The reviewer had quoted from memory.

No one can know better than myself how insufficient these recollections of Russel are as illustrations of his character and his power. No man could do justice to all the varied aspects of his curiously compounded character. Some one has said that the infinitely great and the infinitely little are more or less mixed in every great man's mind. It is true; and it was true of Russel's mind. That he was a great man, no one can doubt. Greatness in men is not confined to warriors or statesmen. He who directly and certainly influences vast bodies of the people to the changing and improving of many of their thoughts and acts is a great man.

Russel did this. He widened the Scottish view of things political. He made intolerance hateful. He lightened the yoke of the priestly Presbyterian minister. He gave wholesome pleasure to thousands of the people. Moreover, in his sturdy adhesion to principle he set a mark against time-serving. He kept to the traditions of the paper he edited. It was founded in generous impatience of jobbery and narrow Toryism. Till he came, it had fought against those evils. He infused new vigour into the fight. He brought a strong, young, powerful mind to the task; and never for a day did he forget what was the work the paper had to do. I have been turning over letters that he wrote in the last months and weeks of his life. There is not one of them that does not relate to the paper and its work. He mourns that he cannot send in an article; or he tells that he has sent in one or two. When he speaks of himself it is mainly in connection with his desire to be able to do work for the paper.

Less than three months before he died, I went down to his country-place at Nenthorn from Friday to Monday. On the Friday there was a deluge of rain, and walking in the grounds was not possible. I wanted to smoke a cigar; and together Russel and I went into the conservatories. There we sat for more than an hour, and there I heard from him what I had never heard before—his appreciation of the work done on the paper in his absence; his ideal of what the paper should be or should continue to be; and his distrust of certain politicians and

public men. Over all the talk there was the shadow of the hand of death. He knew it as I knew it. There were flickerings up of the old jovial spirit now and then, but the flash was little more than momentary. Grave kindliness of tone showed me more clearly than I had previously seen it the genuinely simple affectionate nature of the man : while over all there spread the ineffable sadness of certainty of early parting. I like to think of Russel as I saw him then—vigorous as ever in thought ; kindly-hearted, cordial ; with no boastful word, no bitterness : a true man.

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After the foregoing chapters on Mr. Russel had been written, Mr. J. R. Findlay sent to me the following pages of his impressions of his friend. No one had better opportunities of forming such impressions, and no one was better equipped for appreciating the character of the man with whom he worked for so many years :—

“ It was in the spring of 1845 that Mr. Russel came from Kilmarnock, where he had been for a few months editor of a newly-established weekly newspaper (which did not long survive his departure), to take the position of assistant editor of the *Scotsman*, under Mr. Charles M'Laren ; and I was placed under him as a sort of assistant and pupil of both. Mr. M'Laren gradually withdrew from the conduct of the paper, and finally and formally retired



in 1849. When it was announced that he had done so, it was also stated with perfect truth that Mr. Russel had for a year or two before been actually though not nominally editor. Mr. M'Laren had been anxious to make this announcement for some time previously, and it was delayed only by Mr. Russel's reluctance to assume publicly and fully the position he really held, as he feared that the paper would suffer in repute from change of editor. That he was so modest, and had such a decided distrust of himself, may appear strange to those who, misled by foolish representations, regard him as a type of the self-asserting, aggressive, and boastful journalist. The truth is that all his life he was really a diffident, cautious, and in some respects an essentially timid man,—to the last he had a trick of blushing, of which he was heartily ashamed,—and the impression that he was the opposite arose partly from the sometimes undue force with which he—in common with all such shy men, when really impelled to do so—vindicated his powers and position. He formed his opinions deliberately, he was careful and exact in his statements, and guarded in their enunciation. But having once made himself sure on all points, he was free and fearless in assertion. Though keen in controversy, he most conscientiously respected the personal character, position, and views of the public men against whom he contended. It was only when he thought that the weak were being borne down, or the erring mercilessly condemned, or that religious intolerance seemed likely to triumph, that

he was roused to passionate phrase. He had a high sense of the responsibilities of a public writer ; and I remember being much struck with his remarking, at a period when, by journalistic pressure, he was compelled to write on subjects that he had not had time to study fully, how much it distressed him to hear his own only half-thought-out opinions referred to with what seemed to him too emphatic approval.

“ He revelled in controversy. I once remarked on the deplorable spectacle of a Christian country being broken up into rival and warring sects, and the extreme desirableness of union. ‘ Union,’ he cried ; ‘ I don’t want union ; there would be no fun in union.’ He was delighted with the famous ‘ Cardross case.’ ‘ It will last for ever,’ he exclaimed. ‘ I foresee no end of leading articles.’

“ To Mr. M’Laren’s former assistants, Mr. James Hedderwick and Mr. Thomas Smibert, I, as a youth of twenty, with a certain youthful turn for letters, had been much attracted and attached ; and as Mr. Russel had little regard for the merely artistic side of literature, I was perhaps at first less in sympathy with him ; but if so, in this instance Sir Anthony Absolute’s opinion proved as applicable to friendship as to love—that ‘ it is best to begin with a little aversion.’ In fact he was a man with whom it was impossible to be even casually associated—and I was closely associated with him in his work and his social relations for thirty years—without being strongly attracted to him by his buoyant and sympathetic temperament, his true kindness of

heart, his varied intellectual gifts, and his ready and abounding humour. His circle of friends in those early days was not large—it was not so indeed at any time,—but if a narrow, it was a curiously devoted circle. The personal attachment and admiration of those who from time to time were associated with him in his work was the more notable that he was by no means an easy, encouraging, or helpful master. He always declared almost boastfully that he would rather do a thing himself than tell any one else how to do it. Hence, master in journalism as he was, he left no pupils. If he praised an assistant's work, it was, so to speak, with a grudge—a fashion of speech arising partly out of sheer diffidence on his own part, but not satisfactory to the recipient, until he came to know and recognise the back-handed method. If his praise was stinted, his blame was sometimes bitter. Himself a strong man, and feeling that it was well to have a giant's strength, he sometimes forgot that it was tyrannous to use it like a giant, and came down on the feeble offender with quite unnecessary vehemence. This was rarely the case, however, when he took pen in hand. In writing, no one could be more careful to be just in censure; no one more generous in eulogy—the more valued as being guarded, well founded, and gracefully expressed. But eulogy, perhaps because it was necessarily grave and measured, did not come to him easily. 'You will have to say something handsome of So-and-so,' I once remarked to him, knowing he needed some such incitement. 'Yes,'

he replied ; 'but I would much rather have to say something disagreeable,'—meaning merely that in the latter case he would have more freedom and some fun. Neither in writing nor in speech was he capable of formal censure ; he abhorred the didactic and sermonising style. He only, so to speak, let himself off in *casual flashes* of indignation ; he was absolutely incapable of administering a formal reproof even to the most flagrant offender. With boundless moral courage in public matters, he shrank from any disagreeable personal duty—undoubtedly a weakness, but one for which most people have naturally a sneaking kindness, perhaps from a feeling that they themselves may thus sometimes escape their due.

“It has been said that easy writing makes hard reading. Mr. Russel was not an easy writer in the common sense—that is to say, he was not fluent, though ready enough in the sense that he never failed when called on. He was a hard and steady worker, and he enjoyed his work. I have heard him say that he could not preserve his self-respect unless he did daily a fair day's work. This was, of course, when he was in harness ; when out of it he threw off anxiety and responsibility like a school-boy. He did not care, however, for long holidays ; only for a day or two, or a week or two now and then, and back to work again. Compelled to grapple with all sorts of subjects, he often felt that for their due handling his resources as a student were scanty enough, and he took pains to make the



best of them. He used to twit his lifelong friend, John Hill Burton, by insisting that he (Burton), with his boundless stores of erudition, did not make half so good an appearance as a leader-writer as he himself with his comparatively small stock well applied. He had a horror of hackneyed quotation, and of everything like pedantry, and his methods of composition were certainly the reverse of pedantic. He generally thought out his subject walking about the room, and jotting down his thoughts in shorthand at his writing-table. His cogitations were accompanied by odd motions of his arms and hands, of which he was scarcely conscious, but the absurd style of which was once brought home to him in a fashion that rather astonished him. He had shut himself up one morning in a country-house to work, to which he proceeded in his usual fashion, unaware that his room was overlooked from a neighbouring window. After dinner a lady who had observed him, being an excellent mimic, asked their host if he would like to know how a leading article was written; and getting up and walking about the room she presented to the bewildered editor and the delighted guests a picture of his throes, shrugs, jerks, head-scratchings, pen-bitings, and generally incongruous movements. When his children were very young he would often have one or more of them in the room, romping with them in the course of his composition. Once I remarked to his sister that a certain article was evidently written in excellent spirits. 'Yes,' said she; 'the last paragraph means

that he has had a roll on the carpet with Johnnie or Janet.' He enjoyed writing, and quietly, never boastfully, enjoyed his own good writing and its occasionally rollicking humour as much as any of his readers. But his humour, however exuberant, was always illustrative; his jokes were used only to give light and colour to his argument. He never indulged in the mere 'ground and lofty tumbling' style of some of his imitators. His fun was the effervescence, not a substitute for substance. Even socially he was not in the vulgar sense a humorist. He was no maker of *mots*, no studied sayer of smart things. They rose to his lips as occasion suggested as lightly as bubbles in a pond when a pebble is dropped into it. They were as evanescent, one chasing the other into oblivion. He never retailed them, and he never reported or repeated himself; he had no need. He would tell good stories, but very seldom his own or of himself; and latterly he complained that many stories were told of him which had no foundation—a common grievance with accredited humorists. 'What a brilliant evening we had last night!' said Mr. Charles M'Laren to me one day after a dinner at a friend's house. 'Findlater and I have just been talking of it, and we agreed that with Russel and Hodgson (the late W. B. Hodgson, LL.D.) there, it could not well have been otherwise. But we agreed also in a marked distinction in their contributions to our hilarity. Hodgson's were all drawn from memory or from books, Russel's were entirely original and

fresh, spontaneous as they were sparkling.' It was always so ; he did not joke with difficulty ; seldom was he under any strain, except when, as he himself sometimes confessed, he talked simply to keep the talk going. He hated to see people who had met together ostensibly to enjoy themselves remaining stiff and reserved. To him the 'party in a parlour all silent' would thereby have at once proved themselves 'all damned.' And, while he enjoyed society intensely, he appreciated also the accompaniments of a good table. Leaving an entertainment where the talk had been dull and didactic—this was in his earlier days, before he ventured himself to lead and enliven it—the viands cold, and the liquors scant and thin, he exclaimed, with a sort of pathetic horror in his voice, 'What a night I have had—neither meat, drink, nor amusement!'

"In friendship his tastes were catholic, and his attachments strong. Like Ferdinand in his love of women, he loved men for 'their several virtues.' For all within the intimate circle he would do much, and forgive much. He could even forgive stupidity ; harder for him perhaps than to forgive moral weakness or error. The loss of friends touched him deeply ; he wept such losses bitterly ; they opened a vein of tenderness that underlay a nature otherwise not easily moved. This strong natural affection was, however, always active and acute in the case of his own children, to whom he was passionately attached, and to whom he showed his attachment as long as they were quite young in almost childish displays of

affection. The death of his youngest son Charlie, who at nine years of age was drowned in the Ettrick, was an overwhelming blow, from which he very slowly recovered ; if indeed he ever wholly recovered. He also broke down terribly when a beautiful sister-in-law, with whom he had been closely associated, died abroad. In such bereavements his resource was in hard work ; he bent himself to it with marvellous resolution, and it brought its reward.

“ His *mots* are still repeated by his friends ; and it has often been suggested that they should be chronicled. A goodly string might be collected ; but their lustre would be somewhat dimmed by lapse of time and association ; and it is better that they should only live in tradition, till they die out even there. And most of them were on the whole better fitted for the hour of social pleasure than for the cold expanse of print. It would, however, be most unjust to his memory, to his taste and his judgment, were it to be inferred from the opinion thus expressed that his jests were too coarse and indelicate or too profane for such exposure. Some of them were no doubt delicately indelicate, and some of them in their application of Scripture phrases trenched on what the ‘unco guid’ would set down as profanity. But these were all really as little open to censure in this respect as is the example of his happy use of his familiarity with sacred writ which a legal friend is fond of quoting. More than thirty years ago, the Court of Session decided that Statutory Road Trustees were liable in damages to persons injured by the wrong or



negligence of themselves or their servants. This decision was emphatically reversed by the House of Lords. In 1866, however, the Lords gave a decision in an English case directly contrary to their former one ; and a few years thereafter, when the question came up again in the Court of Session in another Scottish case, the Court found themselves in a dilemma ; and while the majority of the judges thought the first objectionable decision of the Lords was cancelled by their subsequent deliverance, a minority held that they were bound to obey the former decision until a Scotch case should be appealed and reversed. The minority, said Mr. Russel, rightly considered that the House of Lords, having wrongly condemned Scotch lawyers, and wrought havoc in Scotch law and practice, should be made to confess their error and openly undo the mischief. The case, he said, reminded one of St. Paul's message from prison to the magistrates of Philippi : 'They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison ; and now do they thrust us out privily ? nay, verily ; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out.' This, though apt and amusing, is surely harmless enough ; and in point of fact there was neither irreverence nor coarseness in Russel's nature or style ; not only did he not indulge in either himself, but he resented and discouraged it in others. To this habit and feeling his writings bear unequivocal testimony. No ribald phrase or vile allusion is to be found in any of them ; no mockery of religious

feeling or of sacred things. In this respect he is pure as Scott. Like Burns, of whom he was naturally a most ardent admirer and worshipper, he hated and despised hypocrisy ; and his denunciations of hypocrites were often 'nail't wi' Scripture.' He used to quote a saying of a brother editor, James Adam of the *Aberdeen Herald*, that 'there are two books that bother the clergy—Burns and the Bible,' and he was fond of bothering the clergy with both. Among the clergy he had many warm friends ; but like most laymen, he liked them better in their personal than in their professional character and capacity. He had a warm feeling for the simple but kindly hospitalities of country manses ; and was happy in enjoying them. One of his friends, alluding to Russel's exuberant talent for society, his overflowing fun and high animal spirits, remarked that he was always at his best under some slight social restraint. The atmosphere of the manse, the presence of a man of reputation or rank, would supply this little check, and his society was thus rendered the more thoroughly agreeable to such of his associates who, as being less gifted with wit and good spirits, were less fit to cope with his sallies ; making them also less apprehensive of becoming the butts of his sharp though good-natured raillery. He had a great respect for rank and wealth ; despising the latter only when it was allied with vulgarity. He felt or fancied that this alliance was common in the west of Scotland, and a sort of easy prejudice which he indulged against Glasgow and its magnates, he turned

to humorous account in many ways. Religious intolerance roused him to passionate opposition and denunciation ; narrow-mindedness in politics or social life he equally reprobated. As a Scot he was intensely patriotic ; but he did not hold that all virtue began and ended in Scotland. It might perhaps be more truly said, however, that he could see little natural beauty in any country but his own. In his eyes, foreign scenes and foreign travel had no special attractions ; the hills and glens and streams, especially the fishing-streams, of his native land were enough for him. Socially, Edinburgh and its society generally sufficed him. On his visits to London he was petted and run after by many of the best people, and for the time he rejoiced in the whirl and luxury and display of the metropolis, but it had no hold on him. As cities he could admire London and Paris, but his feeling was always 'Peebles for pleasure.' To sum up his character in a word, the ruling passion of his life was to do good to his country and his fellow-men by the untiring, unfearing, and conscientious exercise of his gifts as a political writer. This was his lifelong aim ; he never failed to keep it in view ; and he worked for it to the end. This was the soul of his life and career. All his other traits, too often dwelt on, were, in comparison, mere 'leather and prunella.'"

## CHAPTER XXII

The ecclesiastical yoke in Scotland—A holiday trip—A new acquaintance—The Sound of Mull—Our new friend in a new aspect—Arrival at Portree—Journey to the Quiraing—A funeral procession—"His luggage"—A Gaelic song—Uig and its burial-place—The walk to the Quiraing—Scene in the graveyard—Searching for the family grave—A walk on Loch Duich side—Glen Shiel—The milestones—The Cluny Inn—A dark look-out—Ministerial denunciation of the sin of walking on the Sabbath—Brighter prospects—Sabbatarianism and hypocrisy.

It cannot be doubted that the *Scotsman*, under Alexander Russel's direction, did a great deal to lighten the ecclesiastical yoke which had pressed upon Scotland with much severity. The nature of that yoke can scarcely be understood by any one who did not experience it. My acquaintance with it was not great; for to some extent it had been lessened when I went to Scotland. Yet it was even then pretty heavy. Perhaps this fact could not be better shown than in an episode in a holiday excursion of mine about 1870. There were many interesting features of that holiday besides the ecclesiastical feature, and it may not be amiss if the story be told from beginning to end.

It was early in July that a friend and I started



for what we intended to be in the main a walking and fishing excursion to Skye and the Western Highlands. From Edinburgh we went to Greenock, and there caught either the *Clydesdale* or the *Clansman*—I forget which it was. These ships, which were then under the management of Mr. David Hutchinson and are now under Mr. MacBrayne, trade to the Western Islands and Highlands, calling at several places on their voyage out and home. Their course from Greenock is round the Mull of Cantyre, and sometimes the passage thereabouts is stormy. A lovely warm summer evening found us west of Cantyre, with a heavy ground-swell coming in from the Atlantic. My friend and I, with two fellow-voyagers—a clergyman and a lawyer from Glasgow—were sitting upon a bench on the bridge deck, holding on to the rails as the ship rolled, and singing for our own amusement, when suddenly there came before us on the deck one of the handsomest young fellows I have ever seen. He had the clear-cut features and the fine complexion of the genuine Highlander. He was well dressed in a blue pilot cloth suit. He was so drunk that I doubt whether he could have stood but for the roll of the ship. That roll seemed to correct his stagger; and thus he kept pretty well erect while he listened to us. At last he began to applaud, and I thought was going to sing himself, when one of the officers of the ship came up, took him by the arm, and led him away.

Next morning, shortly after seven o'clock, we

were making our way out of Oban Bay to pass through the Sound of Mull. It was a miserable morning. All trace of the sun—except the general diffusion of light—had disappeared. A raw cold wind blew from the north-west, with abundance of misty rain. Sometimes the misty rain became a heavy downpour. The sea was leaden. The hills were shrouded in their wet cloaks. On the northern side of the Sound of Mull there are high precipitous cliffs coming almost to the water's edge. On that morning what looked like smoke was breaking from the tops of those cliffs. I remember thinking that it really was smoke, and that it might come from an illicit still which some smuggler was working in full confidence that the gauger would not leave his warm shelter on such a morning. But the number of clouds of smoke became too large for this theory. There might be one or two stills in such a quarter; there could scarcely be thirty or forty. Then the discovery was made that what looked like smoke was not smoke: it was fine spray, caught up by the wind from the streams of water as they flowed to the edge of the cliff.

Tired at last of watching these effects, I walked along under the hurricane deck. There I saw our young friend and applauder of the previous evening. He and the clerk of the ship were engaged in loud conversation. I thought they were cursing each other. They were only arguing in Gaelic. Our man stood with his face turned to the side of the

ship. That face was grimy. If he had been a stoker it could not have been blacker. His hands, too, were blackened; there was nothing about him of the neatness of the previous evening. I passed along, thinking no more of the young fellow, though I asked some one how he came to be so black. "Oh," was the reply, "he slept on the coals last night!"

Nothing of interest marked the voyage past Ardnamurchan, along the west coast, through the Sound of Sleat, past Kyle Akin to Broadford and then to Portree. We arrived at this last-named place about nine o'clock in the evening, and at the Royal Hotel found two holiday-makers, with whom we foregathered. Before we went to bed it was arranged that the four of us should drive the next morning to Uig on our way to the Quiraing, one of the sights of the island. This was arranged with the landlord of the hotel. We were to take sandwiches for our luncheon, with wine of the country for refreshment, and to be back in time for a tea dinner.

The next morning came. Rain poured down. I have since learned that it rains on 360 days in the year in Skye. We had not hit upon one of the fine days. Nobody thought of being kept back from the excursion by the rain. The horses in the waggonette in which we were to travel shook their heads as if they enjoyed it. The driver, a young man, was gay—for a Highlander early in the morning. As soon as breakfast was over, we started.

When you leave Portree to travel towards Uig you go along a road which could not be bright if the sun beamed down upon it, but which is surely the most dismal in the world on an ordinary Skye morning such as we had. It runs for a long way through bog and moor. Pools of black water skirt it. The hillocks in the moss are steeped with moisture, and have a dank and wearied look as if they were sentient and knew their condition was hopeless. Melancholy—wet melancholy—broods over the whole scene.

Before we had got far out of Portree I saw before us on the road an ordinary farm-cart travelling in the direction we were going. We speedily overhauled it, and then saw that a couple of planks had been put diagonally across the cart, and that on these planks there rested a coffin. No pall covered it: no attempt of any kind was made to shelter it from the pitiless rain. An old man led the horse that was drawing the cart, and by his side walked a young man, whom I at once recognised as the applauder of the first night of our voyage, and the grimy-faced arguer of the second day.

“Who is that?” I asked our driver; “and what is that coffin doing there?”

“Ah! that is a very sad case. The poor boy in the coffin went to Glasgow three months ago to get work, and he was killed three or four days ago by some machinery. The young fellow is his brother. He has been to Glasgow to bring the body home.”



"I saw him having a row with the purser of the ship," I said; "what would that be about?"

"Oh, it was very funny. The purser wanted him to pay for the carriage of the coffin from Glasgow, and he would not; he said it was his luggage."

No more questions were asked. We drove on through the rain, leaving the cart and its sad load behind. I was anxious to hear Gaelic singing, and I asked the driver if he could sing. With most becoming modesty he admitted that he could. Would he do so? That was another matter. However, at last he consented, and began. Gaelic interests me in a certain way, but I do not admire it as the language of song. Perhaps that is because I know so little of it. Assuredly I know what I like to hear; and my heart does not go out to Gaelic singing. Never can I forget that moan upon the road to Uig. The air seemed to be about eight bars long repeated without end. It went on for miles. We were fast sinking under the combined pressure of wet, wind, and Gaelic song, when happily one of the horses stumbled. The driver stopped his drone, and swore—at least I think he swore; what he said sounded like swearing. Anyway, the singing stopped, and we took care that it did not begin again.

Our drive was to end at Uig, some fifteen miles from Portree, and then we were to walk six or seven miles to the Quiraing. Uig Bay is almost perfectly horseshoe-shaped. The mouth is open

to the Atlantic. From the beach the land rises steeply, and is—or was—so to speak, terraced. That is to say, roads leading to crofters' houses ran, at different heights, along the slope round the bay. The main road formed the topmost of these terraces. As you entered the village on this road you came to an hotel. There we left our conveyance; and from there we began our walk.

About half-way along the road, at the full bend of the bay, there was a graveyard. It was separated from the road by a low wall. Like almost every graveyard in the Highlands, it was in a most forlorn and neglected state. Weeds grew high; not a grave seemed ever to have had the least attention since it was made. I had never seen a Highland burial-place before, and I was a good deal shocked by its condition.

We passed it, went on to the Quiraing, and in due course returned. What a journey that was! The wind blew cold as in winter; rain fell incessantly, now in driving mist-like showers, now in heavy downpour. All the hills were wreathed with mist that rose and fell and thickened and became clearer in the gusty wind. One moment you could see nothing but a great bank of vapour; the next it swirled aside, and black and frowning hills and precipices were disclosed. We might have spared ourselves the walk: next to nothing of the Quiraing could be seen when we got to it. In the wet we munched our sandwiches. In the wet we shivered, if we stood for a moment. In the wet we made

our way back to Uig ; and in the wet we arrived there.

As we came near the graveyard we could see there were four or five men poking among the nettles and other weeds in an apparently aimless way. When we came nearer and looked over the low wall we saw what I for one shall never forget. There, on the grass, a short way into the burial-ground, and not far from what I suppose might be called the lych-gate, there lay a coffin. At the head of it sat a woman, and other two women sat one on each side of the head. Their heads were covered with shawls, drawn under their chins. They swayed backward and forward, and as they swayed they crooned a sort of dirge. Nothing covered the coffin. The rain fell pitilessly upon it and the women. A drearier, sadder, more affecting sight it would be difficult to conceive.

As we stood looking for a minute, a man came up and was entering the graveyard, when I asked him whose body it was that lay in the coffin on the grass. It was, he said, the body of a poor lad who had been killed in Glasgow. It was, in truth, the body we had passed on our way to Uig.

"Who is that decent-looking old man in the Inverness cape among the men in the graveyard?" I asked.

"It is the father of the poor lad in the coffin," was the reply.

"What are they doing there?"

"They are looking for the family grave."

"Do you mean to say that no grave has been dug for the body, then?"

"No; there is no grave yet. They are looking for the family grave. It is so long since there was a burial there, that they cannot find it. But they have gone for a man who knows where it is, and when he comes the grave will be dug."

By this time the gloom was thickening. There was not a sign of summer warmth. A cold wind drove pelting rain in from the sea, to the drenching of every one who might be exposed to it. Those were the atmospheric conditions in which we left that melancholy scene. Once since I have seen a body brought to be buried before the grave was dug; but then it was a bright sunny day. The long train of "mourners" sat on the wall of the graveyard smoking their pipes while the grave was prepared. I looked into that graveyard afterwards and found from the headstones that almost every one buried there had been an octogenarian. One exception there was, a man who was said to have been forty-five years of age when he died. Under this information appeared the line, "He was a promising youth"!

But I have got far away from that Skye burial-ground. I believe that since we were there it has been swept away. A flood from the hills behind washed all of it into the sea below. We left it in wet. The wet continued till we got back to Portree at half-past nine at night, soaked to the skin, shivering with cold, too hungry to eat without some pre-



paration. There is a story of a plain man and his wife who went to see Mrs. Siddons play. For a long time they sat, their interest riveted upon the stage, and tears rolling down their cheeks. At last the man could bear it no longer. "Come away, Sarah," said he, "do ye call this pleasure?" Could we call our day's excursion to the Quiraing pleasure? More miserable bedraggled beings than we were at the end of it could not have been found. Yet I strongly suspect that day will be remembered by all of us with more satisfaction than ninety-nine out of every hundred days of our lives.

After visiting Glen Sligachan and Loch Coruisk we left Skye and found ourselves at Balmacarra, on the mainland. Our intention was to walk along Loch Duich side, Glen Shiel, and the road beyond to Loch Ness and Fort Augustus; from whence we meant to get across country to meet friends at Loch Ericht side.

It was a Saturday morning when we started to walk from Balmacarra to Shiel House. There was not a cloud in the sky. The sun blazed down upon us. At first there was a little shade here and there; but when we had crossed the ferry and got to Loch Duich side, we had to brave the heat. The loch glowed in the sun. Scarcely a ripple stirred on its surface. It seemed of molten gold with distinct purple shading from the hills. The crofters' houses stood out from the heather and the patches of cultivation, with an effect of colour that was infinitely restful to the eye. Now and then the cry of grouse was

heard, but no other sound. Nobody but ourselves was moving. The hills themselves seemed to sleep in the warm and drowsy air. A little of walking on such a day was enough. Some time, hours after we had started, we reached Shiel House, about five or six miles from Balmacarra. I do not believe that even a pedometer would have marked more than six miles for us. But it was enough. We sought repose in the shady recesses of that inn, and only moved out when the sun had gone to bed in glory in the west.

Somebody has described a Scottish summer as "three hot days and a thunderstorm." Like Sydney Smith's jokes, it maligns Scotland. Yet it must be confessed that many hot days do not often come together with us. On that Saturday night when we were at Shiel House Inn there came a thunderstorm. I was dimly conscious of it at the time, though, owing to the fatigue of the day, I slept too soundly to be fully awakened. Next morning the marks of it were seen. There had been torrents along the road. The stream was swollen. From the steep precipices about, small waterfalls poured down. Everywhere the herbage looked greener and fresher, and there was a wholesome cool tone in the atmosphere.

Soon after breakfast, say about nine o'clock, we started on what we expected would be a walk of twenty-five or thirty miles. Our course lay up Glen Shiel. I remember thinking how beautiful that glen was. Without the wildness of Glencoe, it

had a grand rugged beauty with which, to my thinking, Glencoe cannot compare. The Shiel brawls down one side of it, and beyond rise up steep hills, some with sheer precipitous fronts, some clad with heather or indigenous birch. Along the road between these hills we went, knapsack on back, cheerful as good spirits and restfulness could make us. For about two miles the walk was delightful. Then rain began to fall, and pelted heavily. Should we go on, or should we return? It would be cowardly to return; besides, we had no time to spare. Therefore we kept on: so did the rain. It fell without intermission—not a misty pretence of rain, but a downpour of unmistakable water. We plodded on, and as we were crossing a bridge at the head of the glen, a dog-cart passed us on which rode two men and the driver. I noticed no more than this fact; the rain damped all desire to make acquaintances.

One curious feature presented itself as we went along the road. The milestones came at regular intervals; that was not strange. It was a little more out of the ordinary state of Highland milestones that they had been newly painted, and their inscriptions were quite legible. Most strange of all was the information they gave. They were numbered from Shiel House. Thus when we had walked a mile we came to a stone inscribed "Shiel House, 1 mile." Obviously they ought to have gone on in steady progression. But they did not. One would say 2 miles to Shiel House, the next 5 miles to Shiel House, the next 3

miles to Shiel House, the next 8 miles to Shiel House ; and so on. I am not pretending to give the figures on particular stones ; it is only necessary to illustrate the peculiarly misleading information which some of them give. Subsequently I was told by a native in the district that the man who had been employed to paint the stones had got drunk and had repeatedly lost count of his miles. Nobody thought it necessary to alter the inscriptions. The milestones were there ; that was enough. The road led from one point to another ; let the traveller count the number of them for himself. In any case he would get the truth out of one or other of them.

On we went plashing through the rain. Soon we were in a condition that made all further rain of no account. We could not be wetter. Still we rather hankered after shelter ; and at last, a little beyond noon, we found ourselves not far from the place where we assumed, on the authority of guide books, the Cluny Inn must be. It was not in sight ; very little was, except sheets of falling rain. But at the moment there came to us out of the fields to our right a lad, decently dressed, and seemingly regardless of the downpour. Mutual courtesies having been exchanged, he said—

“ You’ll be for the inn ? ”

“ Yes ; is it far from here ? ”

“ No ; it’s just round the corner. There’s a preaching there to-day.”

“ Oh, indeed ! Free Church ? ”

“ Yes.”



"How is it you are not there?"

"Oh, I am a Roman Catholic."

"Ah! Well, let us get to the inn."

In a few minutes we were there. The lad ran ahead of us, and we were met at the porched door by a stalwart handsome lass, who gave us a warm welcome. She threw open the door on the right-hand side of the lobby and asked us to walk in. What a place it was! The lobby was boulder-paved. The smell of stale peat reek was as overpowering as any odour I ever found in Cologne. The room had all the smell, with additions of its own of a damp and earthy kind. The fire-grate was rusty. The paper that had decorated the walls hung in festoons, mouldy with damp. There were an old sofa, some chairs, and a table that looked and smelt as if they had belonged to the first half-civilised chief of a Highland clan. We looked, we sniffed, we wondered. Was it better to be in such a room than out in the fresh clean rain? However, nature is weak. The next inn was fourteen miles away—perhaps more. The desire for refreshment had sprung up. So we stayed.

The stalwart maid could not get us whisky—the landlord was at the preaching, and had the keys. She could show us to a bedroom where we could get into dry clothes. She could light a fire in that room where we stood. All these things she did. A rough towel vigorously applied, and some dry clothes (borrowed), made us fairly comfortable. Then we remembered a flask that one of us carried.

It had not been exhausted. The maid got us glasses, and we tried to aid the efforts of the now-kindled fire to make us warm.

In this condition we sat, when there arose outside the noise of many feet, and we knew the barn was "skailing." "We shall get something to eat soon now," said one of us. Steps were heard in the boulder-paved lobby. The door opened ; a man put his head in and looked at us.

"Are you the landlord?" I asked.

"Yes."

"We would like to have some whisky."

"I don't care to sell whisky on the Sabbath."

"Dear me. Can you give us some dinner?"

"No ; I have nothing to give you."

We stared at each other for a moment. Then the door was pushed more widely open, and the landlord ushered into the room two men, plainly ministers.

"Walk in, Mr. Mackay, and sit down," said the landlord. "Walk in, Mr. Macrae."

Mr. Mackay and Mr. Macrae walked in. One was an old man with a very obvious scratch wig on his head. The other was a younger man with a face as of one who knew his own holiness and your wickedness. I do not remember which was Mr. Mackay and which Mr. Macrae. The elder man sat down in one of the arm-chairs ; the younger man straddled in front of the fire, to which he turned his back. The landlord had left the room. Silence prevailed for a time.

"It's a very wet day," I said at last, with striking originality.

"It's a varra wat day," said the younger man.

Then silence fell upon us again, to be broken in the course of a few seconds by the voice of the younger man.

"Didn't we pass you on the road from Shiel House?"

"If you were in a dog-cart, you did."

"Don't you know it's varra wrong to walk on the Sabbath?"

"Is it more wicked to walk than to ride?"

"Oh, but we had a good purpose!"

"And by what right do you assume that we had not a good purpose?"

Then, my temper being slightly stirred, I added: "To me it seems much worse to take out on a Sunday the four legs of a horse that cannot help itself than it does to take out one's own legs."

If the roof had fallen, the younger man could not have shown more astonishment and indignation. "Come along, Mr. Mackay," said he (I am assuming the old man's name was Mackay); "come along." He stalked to the door, opened it, and out they walked, shaking the dust off their feet upon the two of us.

It happened that the door of the landlord's private room was exactly opposite the door of the room in which we sat. The landlord coming from his room met the reverend gentlemen as they went out of our room. We heard what passed.

"Won't you stay and have a bit of dinner, Mr. ——?" asked the landlord; adding, "I have a nice bit of steak."

"No," said the irate younger minister; "we must be away."

A few minutes later, their dog-cart came up and they drove off into the rain. No sooner were they away than the landlord was in the room where we sat. He rubbed his hands as if with a sense of relief, and then he said, "What can I get for you, gentlemen?" We indicated that a little whisky would not be amiss to begin with.

"But," said I, "cannot you give us something to eat?"

"Oh yes," was the reply; "I have some beautiful fresh herrings and a good steak. Will that do?"

"Of course it will," I said. "But why did you tell us at first that we could not have whisky, and that you had nothing to give us for dinner?"

"Oh," said he, with a smirk, "we have to be careful of the clergy, you know, sir."

That was the whole explanation. In the presence of the Free Church minister, or within hearing of him, the man, like all about him, had to put on the pretence of Sabbatarianism of the most rigid kind. When the ministers were away, common-sense prevailed, and the desire for profit. The ministers might make some people better than they would have been; but this case showed that the chief or most prominent ecclesiastical manufacture was hypocrisy.



We had a good dinner, and after it, the rain having cleared up, our pious Sabbatarian landlord initiated me into the mysteries of fishing with the otter. Everybody who knows anything of the subject knows that otter-fishing is one of the worst forms of poaching.

## CHAPTER XXIII

English misconceptions of Scotland—A bigoted M.P.—John Hill Burton—His idea of reviewing—Mutual Admiration Societies—Burton, the *Scotsman*, and Free Trade—Burton's pedantry—His *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*—An inaccurate quotation—Edward Ellice and Mr. Gladstone—Ellice's papers—Burton's Bohemianism—Dr. John Brown, his kindliness—Professor Blackie—His contributions—His mistakes—The Gaelic way of spelling whisky—The Blackie Brotherhood—Its ending—Some letters of advice—Differences healed.

WHEN I went to Edinburgh in 1868 I knew no one in the city outside the office of the *Scotsman*. All Scotland was a new country to me. I had only visited it once, three months before coming to it to stay. Warnings were addressed to me in London by friends there as to the coldness—atmospheric and otherwise—I should experience in Scotland. At that time—and there are indications that it is to some extent the same now—the London and general English idea of Scotland was that it was cold enough in winter to rival the climate of the North Pole, that the people were scarcely more than half civilised, that the men wore kilts and the women short petticoats with no bonnets, and that no music was known in the country save the skirl of the bagpipes. There

were people in England, and in London especially, who knew better than this, and there are more of them now ; but the general uninformed opinion was as I have stated it ; and among those who were uninformed were many who ought to have been wiser. The warnings addressed to me were not necessary. The change was delightful. There was warm welcome and a bracing climate, and friends soon became many.

It has sometimes occurred to me to ask whether any part of the British Islands has been so much misunderstood in the other parts as Scotland. So far as I know, neither the country nor the people have been much affected by the misunderstanding. Scotsmen have gone on their way with a full share of confidence that they are the chosen people—the “wisest, discreetest, virtuoussest, best” of all men ; and that the “pock-pudding” Englishman is but a poor creature. Mistakes are made on both sides ; and I have no intention to burn my fingers by getting between them. Perhaps it would be difficult for any Scotsman to get up so keen a feeling against England as an Englishman I once met had got up against Scotland. He was a member of the House of Commons. We met at Interlaken and at other places in Switzerland, and we talked together—or rather he talked to me. I heard his political views, which were crude ; I heard his opinion of the House of Commons, which was rude ; and I heard his opinion of Scotland, which was, let us say, extreme. He was confiding to me how he meant to dispose

of his fortune, which, I believe, was considerable. "In my will," he said, "it shall be provided that if any of my children ever go to Scotland, even for a visit, he or she or they shall be disinherited. Not a farthing of my money shall they have."

"Goodness gracious!" said I; "what has poor Scotland done to offend you?"

"Poor Scotland!" he replied in a tone of ineffable contempt—"poor Scotland is a blasphemous Calvinistic country, where no honest man can keep his honesty, and no modest woman her modesty."

"Have you ever been in Scotland?" I asked.

"Only once or twice, but I know it well!"

"That is surprising. All I can hope for is that I may escape the general contamination."

"I hope you may," was the serious answer, given as if the speaker thought the hope not in the least likely to be realised.

That man represented a division of London, and had made some appearance in the House of Commons. He lost his seat in 1892. Long before I met him ample proof had been given to me that views like his were next akin to sheer imbecility.

Not long after I came to Edinburgh I made the acquaintance of John Hill Burton, who was then Historiographer-Royal for Scotland. He was one of the most eccentric men I have ever met. He seemed to have a supreme contempt for all ordinary conventionalities. He dressed shabbily; he had an untidy appearance. He lived among books, and the



dust upon them seemed to have become engrained in his skin and his garments. He had an excellent opinion of his own ability, and it was justified; for he had done most admirable historical work for Scotland. His political friends—he had always been a Whig—had obtained for him the post of Chairman of the Prison Board, and in that position he did great and good work in the establishment of a system of judicial and criminal statistics.

Of all these things I heard from him. But chiefly he loved to dilate on his past connection and present association with the *Scotsman*. He had been a contributor to its columns for many years; and until his death he wrote reviews of books for it. He got more books to review than he ever reviewed. He was, indeed, one of an old school of writers for newspapers, who never troubled about anything that did not specially interest them. If they were asked to review a book they would take it, and, unless it greatly interested them, no review of it was ever forthcoming. Burton must have had scores—nay, hundreds—of books put into his hands never to be reviewed, but to be stored on his shelves.

All this was wrong. Though a book may not have a special interest for a reviewer, it may have much interest for a great public, and they ought to be considered. But I suspect that Burton would never have admitted their right to consideration. He was the judge of what was best for them, and they ought to be content to remain without knowing what he had kept from them. The truth is, that

there was a good deal of mutual admiration in those days, and in the days before them. Let any one turn to the books and records of the time and they will find that this eminent man praised that eminent man; that every one who had any individuality, if he showed it in an extravagant fashion, was a genius; and that, in short, the world had never seen such a collection of truly great and good men as then existed.

Do not let it be supposed that this mutual admiration was confined to Edinburgh, or has not been heard of in later days. Wherever two or three geniuses were gathered together, whether in London or Scotland, or in any small town in England, they set up an altar in the midst of them, and they worshipped each other and themselves. They do it now. But there is this difference between the mutual admiration of to-day and the mutual admiration of the past: the latter comes down to us in print or otherwise, and we imagine it must have been well deserved; the former we know to be empty and a mere exhibition of unbounded conceit.

There is no doubt that John Hill Burton was an able man. There is equally no doubt that he was an eccentric man. He had great humour of a caustic kind. I do not think he was sympathetic. He prided himself upon the firmness with which he held his opinions. It always seemed as if he were afraid of showing kindly feeling. I do not mean that he was, or even appeared to be, an unkindly man. Such an impression would be altogether

unjustifiable. What I mean is that he shut out kindness towards individuals in the exercise of his function of critic. When he had his pen in his hand every man and every matter must be discussed on sound—or what he believed to be sound—principles, and the man or the opinion he objected to had a bad quarter of an hour. It always seemed to me that there was a great similarity between the style of many chapters of Burton's *History of Scotland* and that famous 19th chapter of Kinglake's *History of the Crimean War*.

One story Burton never tired of repeating to me. It was that he had committed the *Scotsman* to Free Trade. "Mr. Charles M'Laren had gone for a holiday"—I am quoting Burton—"and had left the paper in my charge. There had been cautious treatment of the Corn Law question previously: I went straight for Free Trade. Charles was very anxious about it; but I knew I was right." Nothing is more certain than that Burton had come to believe all this. Yet it ought to be taken with some allowance. Mr. M'Laren was not sure that Free Trade could be adopted all at once. He wished to look at the matter from all sides. He saw that if the step were taken it could not be recalled; and he wanted to be sure that it was a right step and one that would benefit the country. Burton thought more rapidly, if he did not see more clearly. Assuredly he had absolute confidence in his own judgment, and once he had formed an opinion he would proclaim it everywhere as if it

were a divine revelation. Thus, if he had the temporary authority over the *Scotsman* that he said he had,—and without in the least desiring to attribute conscious inaccuracy to him, I doubt the story,—and if he was on the side of Free Trade, as I am sure he was, he would not hesitate for a moment to commit the paper to his views. In his later days he was firmly convinced that he was the author of the Free Trade policy of the *Scotsman*. It delighted him to repeat the story.

There was a curious mixture of pedantry and carelessness in Burton. I have heard him find fault on most pedantic grounds with a passage in a leading article, and at the same interview he has handed in an article with many careless passages. Somebody had asked in the *Scotsman* what region of the earth was there that was not filled with the works of Scotsmen. Burton complained of this. It was, he said, a mistaken rendering of Virgil's line, *Quæ regio in terris*, etc., for that the word *laboris* did not mean labours or works but griefs. I am afraid I laughed at him. A day or two afterwards he brought in a review of a volume of charters or registers, and in it were most egregious blunders.

When Burton was bringing his last book, the *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, to a close, he talked about it to me on many occasions. He had no doubt that it was to be the greatest work of its kind. Some time before he was ready for publication, a *History of the Reign of Queen Anne* by, I think, Mr. Wyon, made its appearance. The



period to which it referred always had great interest for me, and I read the book with much pleasure. It was admirably done, with an amount of care that left little or nothing to be desired. I spoke to Burton about the book, and asked him if he had seen it. He had not, and he did not intend to look at it. I told him its general scope and method of treatment, not in reply to any question of his, but because I thought, as he had a book on the same subject nearly ready, it might interest him to know how Mr. Wyon had done his work. The information did not seem to interest him in the least.

A little later Burton asked me if I would look over the proofs of his book. I was glad to have the opportunity, and I told him so. The proofs were brought, and I read them with positive dismay. There was much of the good writing and cynical humour that had distinguished Burton's previous works; but, alas, there was slovenliness in almost every page, and a general want of grip that seemed to indicate failing powers. I had not the courage to tell Burton what I thought, but contrived to get out of the difficulty by suggesting some verbal corrections here and there. I do not believe that one of them was made, and I am certain the book would not have been any better if they had been made.

One of the corrections suggested was promptly and sharply put aside by Burton. In one of the chapters he had quoted Home's lines beginning

Firm and erect the Caledonian stood.

I pointed out that he had misquoted them. He refused to make the corrections I suggested. "What does it matter?" he asked. "If it had been a wrong quantity in Latin it would have been a different thing." There was no arguing against this position. The quotation, incorrect as it was, remained unaltered.

Burton had been on terms of close acquaintance with most of the Whigs of 1832 and later. He had helped them, and they helped him to appointments which he deserved, and the duties of which he discharged with great ability. One of his Whig friends was the elder Edward Ellice, the so-called "Bear Ellice," who sat for Coventry for many years. Burton told me that Mr. Ellice had often expressed distrust of Mr. Gladstone, and on one well-remembered occasion had said, "Never trust him; he is a monk at heart." Burton often repeated this story, partly, I suspect, by way of warning to me, whom he thought to be too favourably inclined to Mr. Gladstone.

Shortly before his death Burton brought to me some of Edward Ellice's papers. He had received them from Mrs. Ellice of Invergarry, who, he said, had asked him to edit them for publication. He wanted to know whether I thought the particular papers he had brought, referring to party management during the Reform Agitation of 1830-32, should be printed. My advice was that they should not. Whether Burton would have followed that advice it is impossible to say. He

died shortly afterwards. The papers were, I believe, returned to Mrs. Ellice, and I have never heard of their publication.

There was a kind of Bohemianism about Burton that nothing could ever have eradicated. It was amusing, though occasionally it took an embarrassing form. He lived at an old house a little distance from the City, on the slope of the Craiglockhart Hill. It is now part of the magnificent new Asylum for the Insane, which has been erected from designs by Mr. Sydney Mitchell. The architect has worked the old house into the great group of buildings with infinite skill and the best effect. On one occasion Russel, myself, and Mr. Robert Cox, uncle of the present M.P. for South Edinburgh, were invited to dine with Burton. We got there, we found our way, or were piloted up stone spiral staircases, and through dim passages, first to the drawing-room and then to the dining-room. There were books in all directions, and after some delay there was dinner. The one feature of it that I remember was that Burton had the wine for use in bottles under the table. Did the wine *on* the table run short, he fished up another bottle from under the table. So we went to the end of the entertainment. It was an entertainment in other than a material aspect. The talk was good. Russel's buoyancy had a capital foil in Burton's cynicism. A merrier evening was never spent.

The memory of that dinner brings another incident and another figure to my mind. We, the

visitors, had to drive out to Burton's house; and it had been arranged that I should pick up Russel and Mr. Cox on my way. Mr. Cox lived in Rutland Street. I drove there, got to the house, rang the bell, was admitted and directed to a room at the back. When I entered it I found myself face to face, not with Mr. Cox, but with Dr. John Brown, the author of *Rab and His Friends*. For a moment we both looked blank, then laughter followed. He had expected a patient, and never thought to see me. I had got to the wrong house, Mr. Cox lived next door. We had two minutes of pleasant chat and then parted.

Dr. John Brown was the gentlest, kindest, most amiable man I ever had the pleasure of knowing. His character was reflected in his books. I never heard him say a harsh thing to or of anybody. I do not believe he was capable of speaking harshly. He had a sharp wit and ready humour, but he never used either to wound the feelings of any man or woman. He was inquisitive—what thoughtful and imaginative men are not?—yet he never sought to pry into matters of personal concern. He was a searcher after information, not a mere gossip. One evening he came into my room at the office rather late. I expressed my surprise at seeing him there so near the limit of elder's hours, when he explained:—He had been on a visit to Russel at his country-place, and had brought a message from my Editor to me. He delivered the message, and then he referred to an article in that morning's paper. "You wrote that article," he said.



"I cannot tell you," was my reply.

His eyes began to dance a little as he said, "Oh, man, you need not make a secret of it! Russel told me you wrote it."

"Russel did not know; he never saw it till he saw it in the paper."

"And do you suppose he does not know your articles when he sees them?"

"I am not sure that he always does; but no doubt he is generally right in his surmises about my authorship."

"Well, he is right this time; so no more need be said on that subject."

Then he went on to ask me questions as to where I had got some facts set forth in the article, and finally he left me with kindly words of parting. He never failed to praise what he thought was a praiseworthy literary effort in the paper. I had many letters from him in commendation of articles—descriptive or of general interest—that had appeared. Now and then would come a word of criticism, always kindly, and always sound. No sneering, no bitterness, could be found in anything he wrote or said. He was in love with the world—not with worldliness, but with everything animate and inanimate in creation. Evil was a pain to him; good was his desire. He thought more of others than of himself. His modesty was the feature of his character that was known to all men. He was not bashful, as are some men who yet do impudent things; but he was not desirous of parading before

the public, or of singing his own praises, or of showing other people how utterly insignificant they were. He won the love of every one, he won literary reputation of a high order; and he deserved both the love and the reputation. He was the truest embodiment I have known of Coleridge's description of a really good man—

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small.

No one has come in his place. We have good writers, good thinkers, kindly men; we have no Dr. John Brown.

A widely different man was Professor Blackie. No one could see him marching along the street, plaid on shoulder, staff in hand, without seeing that he had what the Kilbarchan weaver called "a guid conceit o' himsel'." I am inclined to think the world likes that kind of development. It is disposed to take a man at his own estimate. If he be modest and retiring, he may win the love of friends, and the esteem of the appreciative; but he will not be a great man, or a comparatively great man, in the eyes of the world. It wants self-assertion. It got plenty of that commodity from Professor Blackie. He believed in himself, and did not trouble much about others. He praised dead writers; they could not be rivals. Sometimes he praised living workers, with an *ex cathedra* manner, and an air of patronage which no one could mistake. I am sure he had kindly emotions; he could not

otherwise have had the esteem of so many good men. But it was not for his kindliness that the public liked him, and he knew the fact.

For a long time after I made his acquaintance he contributed to the columns of the *Scotsman*. Indeed he did so almost to his death. He wrote well and vivaciously, in a dogmatic tone, that was infinitely amusing. Sometimes this tendency got him into trouble. On one occasion he had written for us a series of articles on Loch Tay, and the places of interest on its shores. In one of these articles—about Killin, I think—he paused in a rapid sentence about whisky to say “(uisquebagh ; for that is the proper Gaelic way of spelling the word).” The article appeared, and on the afternoon of the same day a letter came to hand for publication. The writer said that Professor Blackie had made a strange mistake ; there was no such letter as “q” in the Gaelic language ; the proper way to spell whisky in Gaelic was “uisgebagh.” The letter was published. Blackie took no notice of it. Many more letters of a similar kind came to hand, and, so to speak, I pelted Blackie with them. At last he could stand it no longer, and he wrote a short indignant letter. Could the writers of the other letters, he asked, suppose that he was so ignorant as not to know there was no “q” in Gaelic, and that whisky was spelt “uisgebagh” ? “Uisquebagh” was a printer’s error, for which he was not responsible. I published the letter, simply putting this note to it :—  
“Professor Blackie revised the proof of his article.”

On the afternoon on which this appeared, he came to my room manifestly in anger.

"Why did you put that note to my letter?" he asked.

"It was the truth."

"There is no occasion to tell the truth in such a matter."

"I am sorry to hear that doctrine from you, Professor, though of course I knew you practised what you now preach."

"What do you mean? Do you mean that I tell lies?"

"No. The matter so far is one for a casuist to settle. In your letter about whisky you said 'uisquebagh' was a printer's error. Presumably you believed what you said. But it was not a printer's error. You wrote 'uisquebagh.' There it is"; and I produced his manuscript. "You revised your proof, and you left 'qu' standing where 'g' should have been."

"Oh," said he, "you make too much of it. What does it matter?"

And, swinging his plaid over his shoulder, he tapped me in a friendly way on the head, and marched out singing a scrap of Scots song.

Soon after I made Blackie's acquaintance, he asked me to become a member of a club called the "Blackie Brotherhood." It was a social club—with twenty or thirty members, all more or less known men in Scotland. The members dined together once or twice a year; that was the purpose of the



club. Blackie took the chair at the dinner. He was "the Chief." He proposed me for election: I was elected; and I went to dinners. Never was any experience more delightful. Blackie was the most autocratic and the best of chairmen. There was a constant flow of wit, with now and then some wisdom. I doubt whether a better company could have been gathered in Scotland. Some came from Glasgow, and some from other parts of the country. All had a high position in their respective spheres, as clergymen, doctors, and the like. Bear in mind that this is true not merely of one particular dinner, but of all. They were the most buoyant, the wittiest, the most intellectual of social gatherings that I have known.

Unhappily they came to an end, and I was the cause—the very unwilling cause. This was the manner of the end. Blackie had rushed into a Highland agitation, and he had said many things that, as it seemed to me, he ought not to have said. He used language at times which was little short in violence of the language used by Irish Land Leaguers. He was sharply criticised in the *Scotsman*, and on one occasion he was told that what he had said was dangerously near to being an incentive to crime. He was highly indignant, but he made no complaint to me. Shortly afterwards, when a dinner of the Blackie Brotherhood was coming near, he sent word to the Rev. Dr. Cameron Lees, who was then the Captain of the Club, that I was not to receive intimation of the dinner;

he would not permit me to be present. Dr. Lees replied in effect that I was as much entitled to be present as any other member of the Club, and that he could be no party to my exclusion. I believe he begged Blackie to reconsider his objection. Blackie refused, and insisted upon my exclusion. Thereupon Dr. Lees declined to act as Captain, and sent the minute-books to Blackie; the dinner never took place, and the Blackie Brotherhood came to an end.

It has sometimes occurred to me that Blackie's practice in this case, as in others, did not exactly square with his preaching. Perhaps I am wrong; and in any case it is right that my experience of his preaching as distinct from his practice should be told.

One Sunday in February 1882 I received from Blackie a letter and two enclosures. The letter was an introduction to me of Miss Stoddart, who was taking a great interest in the anti-opium agitation, and who, I suppose, wished to enlist the *Scotsman* on the side of that agitation. This letter was not written by Blackie himself, but by an amanuensis. One of the enclosures informed me that he had been suffering from "three devils." The "devil of ophthalmia" was one; the names of the others I forget. They had confined him to his room, and had compelled him to use the pen of another for writing to me. The other enclosure was a sonnet. It was introduced with these words—

I send you a sonnet, not for publication, from which you will see how grandly I am able to return that sympathetic spirit with which you review some of my best books!

The sonnet was written on a sickbed, and if it looks sickly it is only natural.

The sonnet did look sickly. It was an attack on newspapers. They were "loathly lazar-houses," wherein the sores and sins of the body-politic and the individual were gathered together and exposed, to the horror of sensitive souls.

When I had got through most of my work on the paper that evening, I wrote a "sonnet" in reply to Blackie's. My lines pointed to the cowardice of those who shrank from looking facts in the face. That is all I can remember of it. That night it was posted to Blackie with a letter in which I said I would rather not see Miss Stoddart; for that I had no sympathy with the anti-opium agitation, and was not inclined to do anything that might cause my fellow-subjects in India to be more heavily taxed than the Chinese might be induced to grow opium for themselves. Then I said the poet of the establishment had been turned on to produce a sonnet in reply to the one sent to me. He had written one, which was enclosed. It was, I thought, as true as Blackie's own, and that was all the merit it could claim. There was no difficulty in foreseeing what the result would be.

Next day's post brought me the following letter written by Blackie himself:—

MY DEAR EDITOR—Your sonnet is quite right; and so is mine. Most moral questions are a balance of contraries, which, however, are not contradictions. The only question for practical men is *what, when, where, how, and how much* of each. See *Aristotle*.

As to the opium question, I knew beforehand what your opinions would be on that subject. Myself and not a few others in Edinburgh—who are neither fools nor bigots—have long felt that there is a certain range of social questions for which the *Scotsman* has no organ. Admiring, as we cannot fail to do, the general talent and practical wisdom of the paper, no amount of wit and cleverness, no dexterous manipulation of Blue Books, much less the iterated commonplaces of a one-eyed political economy, falsely so-called, can compensate for the lack of *reverence and love*, which, as Goethe teaches, lie at the root of all true excellence, both intellectual and moral. What the *Scotsman* lacks is, in our opinion, a lofty moral inspiration and a generous moral chivalry. Add only these necessary things to your present virtues, and you will reign without a rival over the hearts of all true Scotsmen.—Sincerely yours, JOH. S. BLACKIE.

No copy of my reply to this letter was kept by me. What I remember of it is, that while thanking Blackie for his advice, I asked how it was to be applied. Was the *Scotsman* in the name of “reverence and love” to leave undone things that ought to be done, and to try to mislead the public by not giving them the facts of the time? I must have said something as to my own motives and objects. Anyway, the result was that Blackie sent me the following letter:—

MY DEAR EDITOR—It was very good in you to take my preachment so seriously: somewhat too seriously perhaps. I did not in the least mean to impeach the purity of your principles or the honesty of your character as a journalist; I spoke rather of a hereditary tone in the *Scotsman* newspaper, which had



attained full dimensions before you had anything to do with its character, and which, so far as I know, you may not possibly even now be able in all points to mould or to control. As little did I mean—though no doubt given to preaching—to obtrude my *personal* advice on you. I only thought it as well, in the way of friendly confidence, that you should not be ignorant of a certain feature in the conduct of your journal, which a considerable number of your constant readers could wish to be otherwise. But of course if you do not see the fault, or imagine it perhaps rather to be an excellence, you cannot mend it. It is quite possible also that we may be wrong; only we may claim to have our views seriously considered, and not flung overboard as a dish of feeble and frothy sentiment.

There are two forces in the present age potently at work, to which in my opinion a wise leader of public thought should seek to apply the rein rather than the spur; I mean the notion that all things are to be explained from the *outside*, from the merely *material* and *mechanical*; and again, the conceit that in the constitution of society mere knowledge can achieve any valuable result, without noble emotion, or what I call moral inspiration. The mechanical is merely the engine: the steam that is to move the engine comes from another source altogether, and can never be created by any amount of mechanical appliances, or physical knowledge. The cognitive faculty can direct, and tabulate, but it cannot create. It is utterly destitute of plastic vitality; in the words of Burns—

The heart aye's the part aye  
That makes us right or wrang.

As to *political economy*, of course I respect its laws as I respect those of mechanics. I have read not a few treatises on the subject, and have studied certain branches of it in minute detail; but I can allow it no dominant or legislative place in social science. Without moral inspiration it is a body without a soul; tools, if you please, rather, without a workman, or with a bad workman, or a mad one.

I suppose nothing more can profitably be said; but if we are wise men this accidental interchange of antagonistic thought cannot remain without some advantage to both parties.—Yours with sincerity,

JOH. S. BLACKIE.

It is no part of my intention to discuss this letter here, further than to say that it is based on assumptions which might be questioned. It assumes that a newspaper which deals with facts—"chiels that winna ding"—has no moral force or inspiration behind it; which might be true, but is most likely to be false. Further, it assumes that the "noble emotion" or "moral inspiration" of the writer is the only thing of its kind that is true, and that therefore it ought to be the guide of those who wish to influence public thought. On this point one other experience of mine with Blackie may throw some light.

Now and then he delivered addresses to his students or to some Society. He took pains with these addresses and wrote them out in full. When he had done so, he frequently brought them to me with a request that the speech as written might be embodied in our report of the gathering at which it was to be delivered. These requests were complied with for a long time. But it came to my ears that the speeches we printed were not the speeches Blackie delivered. Instead of giving them, he wandered off into many side paths to win the laughter of his audience. In this he invariably succeeded, though, so far as I could gather, the audience laughed at him, not with him. My feeling was that the *Scotsman* ought not to print an address as delivered by Blackie, when in fact he had delivered one that was in all respects different. As it seemed to me, we were deceiving the public and providing

material that might mislead the future biographer of Blackie. Thus it came about that I declined to print the written speeches, and directed that his orations should be reported as they were delivered. Blackie was exceedingly indignant. "What did it matter to the public?" he asked. The written speech was what he meant to say; the spoken might be regarded as nonsense—the public got the best. In vain did I urge that the public did not get the real speech, which was all that the newspaper, as the historian of current events, was bound to give. I hinted that it was not quite honest to publish a literary or moral essay and describe it as a delivered speech, when it never had been delivered. Blackie's "moral inspiration" did not enable him to appreciate the objection; and I do not doubt that he regarded the refusal to print more written but undelivered speeches as a further proof of the absence of that "noble emotion" to which he attached so much importance.

In connection with the break-up of the "Blackie Brotherhood," mention has been made of Blackie's anger because he had been severely criticised in the *Scotsman*. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to say that no personal feeling dictated that criticism. So far as I was concerned, it never occurred to me to think that I had any individual grievance against him. What may be described as public duty is one thing; private friendship is another. The *Scotsman* has often criticised the public doings and sayings of men who were my private friends, and I do

not believe that our friendship was lessened thereby, except, for a time, in Blackie's case. Some of our friends sought to heal the difference. It was not a quarrel, because two aggrieved persons are requisite to make a quarrel. Blackie was deeply offended with me; I was not in the least offended with him. This was told to the friends who came to me, and further it was said that Blackie might be told this. But he wanted an apology in the paper for what had been said of him there; and as I thought nothing had been said that was not fair and necessary criticism an apology was out of the question.

At last I met him face to face on the Waverley Bridge. He stopped me and he said—

“Do you think it right that two Christian gentlemen should not be on speaking terms with each other?”

“No; I do not.”

“Then let us shake hands and have done with it.”

“With all my heart,” I replied.

We shook hands, and then he said—

“But you were very hard on me.”

“You were very foolish, Professor. But if we begin to argue the matter you may regret having shaken hands with me. Let us be content to hold our own opinions.”

“That is wise,” he said; and though I am not sure he ever quite forgave me, I know that he embraced me in public—it was a way he had; and he sent letters and sonnets and other communications to the paper as in former time.



## CHAPTER XXIV

Misleading journalists—A case in point—"The biggest liars in Edinburgh"—Too much caution—The betrothal of the Princess Louise—The anonymous letter writer—Some specimens—A United Presbyterian minister and anonymous letters—Conviction and penitence—The "Christian minister" and the wickedness of the newspaper—A lunatic visitor—An important discovery—Lunatic letter-writers—Police advice and criticism—The students and the Editor—An unpleasant lesson—An angling recollection.

No calling is so open to error owing to misinformation as is that of the journalist, and in no other hands can misinformation have such serious results. No one tells a journalist the thing that is not unless in the hope that the story may be published. If it be published, the resultant injury may be widespread and severe. For this reason it is greatly to be desired that those who have the direction of newspapers should be careful as to the acceptance of statements that may be made to them. I am not the judge of my brethren, but I can think what I please, and sometimes the thought occurs to me that a few of them are, like my old colleague Washington Wilks, more desirous of picturesqueness than of accuracy. All of us are liable to be deceived; we need not encourage the deceivers.

This is but a prelude to the story of an experience of my own. Not long after I came to Edinburgh, while the general election of 1868 was going on, three men called at the *Scotsman* office and asked to see the Editor on duty. At that time there was not much care exercised as to callers; they were allowed to walk up into the editorial rooms without check. These three men came up, and found me. They were the friends and helpers of a candidate for the representation of a county constituency not far from Edinburgh. I did not know them, though the name of one of them was familiar to me as that of a man who was credited with having made an important discovery in medicine. Their candidate was on our side of politics, and of course we were ready to help him. The three had a story of his wonderful progress to tell. They told it, and assured me not only that it was true, but that its publication was of great importance to their candidate. It was published.

Next day when I met Russel he asked where the paragraph about —— election had come from. He was told that I had written it from information given to me. "Who gave you the information?" he asked. I told him the names of my three informants. "Man," said he, "they've done you. They're the biggest liars in Edinburgh, which is saying a good deal. Nobody would trust a word they said. However, you could not know that; but you will know it in future." The whole story was false. A night or two later two of the three tried

to play me a like trick. They did not succeed; but they heard something that if they took it to heart might have been for their souls' welfare.

Many more or less similar experiences have been mine. In one case a man brought to me the announcement that he had been appointed to a colonial governorship. It was to be made known the next week; but he had thought the *Scotsman* ought to have the first news. Guilelessly I accepted the story, asking for no proofs. There was not a word of truth in it. In the ordinary sense, the man was sane.

When you have been deceived, you become cautious; perhaps you become too cautious. This again has been my case. News which was true has been kept out of the paper for a day or two because I could not be sure of its accuracy. One day we received a letter bearing the Inveraray post-mark. It was not in the handwriting of one who was accustomed to the use of the pen. It was not signed; the words in it were not correctly spelt in all cases. It stated that an engagement had been made between the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne, and that the marriage would take place soon. I laughed; the trick was too palpable! Fancy anybody thinking we could be taken in by a story like that! Alas! all the self-conceit was dashed two days afterwards by the announcement of the engagement in the *Morning Post*. The story was true. If it had been accepted, the *Scotsman* would have been the first to let the

world know of what had been arranged. The moral is, not that journalists should jump at every story that is brought to them, and publish it on the chance that it may be true, but that every story should be inquired into, and not one put aside because of its apparent improbability.

Another of the delights of editorial life is the anonymous letter. Sometimes I have wondered whether this form of communication can be as common in England as it is in Scotland. Rarely a week passes without one or more reaching me. They are of all kinds. Some have been from writers who were concerned for the safety of my soul; some have been expostulations in regard to particular reports of public matters; most of them have been from terribly aggrieved politicians whose consciences were shocked to the point of anonymous letter writing, by the political attitude of the paper. These last are most numerous when there has been disappointment on the one side or the other. They were very numerous in the latter part of 1886, and they have been frequent in 1896.

For my own part, I do not object to anonymous letters about myself sent to myself. It is a weakness of mine to desire to see myself as others see me, and glimpses of this kind are got from anonymous letters. Most men have more or less an idea of their own good qualities; what they want is knowledge of their deficiencies and weaknesses and wrongdoings. Your anonymous letter writer points these out with perfect frankness. One such



letter begins—"Sir, you are a LIAR!" It is impossible to go on in a career of inaccuracy when you are liable to be reminded of it in so striking a manner. Here is another opening to a letter—"Sir, you are a FOOL!" That may be true, but the announcement coming suddenly gives one a shock. Another opening to a post-card letter I received at my house a few days ago, signed "A Liberal," runs—"What a raving idiot you are!" Could anything be more calculated to lessen and indeed destroy self-conceit?

Of course all your anonymous correspondents know far better than you do how a newspaper ought to be conducted. They also know that as on this point your views and theirs do not coincide, you must be a "scoundrel," or a "liar," or a "fool." If you give support to a particular statesman, you are a toady: if you oppose him, you are actuated by the most malignant motives. It may be submitted that communications of this kind are a wholesome discipline for most of us. We may take the lesson to heart, though we may not admire the teacher.

It has been said that my receipt of anonymous letters in 1886 was large. In that year the *Scotsman* had opposed Mr. Gladstone as to Home Rule, and at the general election the Gladstone Government had been defeated. Some supporters of Home Rule, with the proverbial zeal of converts, were very bitter against the *Scotsman* and all connected with it. Their bitterness found expression in anonymous letters. Several of these were unclean

in the moral sense ; some were prophetic of the destruction of the paper if it did not abandon its opposition to Home Rule ; some were simply abusive. One writer sent letters almost every other day. This is a feature of anonymous letter writing ; there may be many different writers, but there will be one who evidently thinks he has a mission, and who will write day after day. In the latter part of 1886 such a writer began to pay us attention. For some time I thought no more of his productions than I did of others ; they were abusive, prophetic, occasionally filthy. At last, on receipt of one of them, written on peculiar paper, I thought it might not be amiss to try to discover who the writer was. The post-mark on the envelope showed the provincial town from which the letters came. I sent a piece of the paper on which the letter itself was written to a stationer in that town and asked him if he could inform me where such paper was sold, and to whom. The first shot told. The stationer to whom I wrote had sold the paper himself to a United Presbyterian minister in the town, who was his only customer for it.

My next question was, Did he know the rev. gentleman's handwriting ? He did ; he sent me a letter written by the minister to himself. It must be remembered I had not told the stationer why the information asked for was wanted. He had long been our local correspondent, and he knew that he would not be troubled without good cause. The letter of the minister sent by him was put into the hands of an expert in handwriting along with

one of the anonymous letters. The expert said without hesitation, what was indeed clear enough, that the two letters had been written by the same hand. In the anonymous letter there was some attempt at disguise, but it was ineffective.

Thus the way was cleared for action. A letter was written to the minister, in which he was told that the Editor of the *Scotsman* had traced a series of anonymous and nasty letters to him. The Editor proposed to put the letters before the heads of the United Presbyterian Church, but thought it right, before doing so, to give the rev. gentleman himself an opportunity of putting forward anything he might desire to say. The answer was evasive. Practically the authorship of the letters was admitted. Their anonymous character was justified on the ground that the Editor of the *Scotsman* was anonymous. Strong political statements were made, and, generally speaking, the tone of the reply was aggressive and justificatory.

Another letter was addressed to his Reverence, in which he was told that he seemed to have mistaken the meaning of the first letter. The Editor had made no personal complaint, and did not mean to make any. All he desired was to know whether in the opinion of the minister, and perhaps, more particularly, whether in the opinion of the heads of the United Presbyterian Church such anonymous communications as he had received were consistent productions of one who was engaged in the Christian ministry.

This brought a long, confused, and piteous appeal. Indeed it brought two appeals; for the rev. gentleman, having written one letter, thought it necessary to write a second on the same day. I could not but be sorry for the unhappy man. Evidently his trouble was great. All the evil-doing, he said, had come of mixing in political affairs. Writing in the third person, he said, speaking of himself —“ He has experienced the political sphere to be inimical to the peculiar sphere of the Christian minister. All these things have arisen from the period of the Home Rule legislation.” What mischief that Home Rule legislation, or attempted legislation, did! Not only did it break up the Liberal party, it led a Christian minister to write nasty anonymous letters.

It was a peculiarity of the replies of the rev. culprit that he sought to lay stress upon what he spoke of as the “irreverent treatment given to the Word of God” by the *Scotsman*. He told how his feelings as a “Christian minister” had been harrowed by the profanity of the paper. He did not seem to see that the pain of his goodness in feeling the evil of the *Scotsman's* wickedness had not kept him from doing a dishonourable and immoral act. That was his look-out. He finished the letter from which a sentence has been quoted with these words —“ He ” (that is himself) “ has to state, as the result of his present experience, that he has formed the resolution to sever himself wholly and perpetually from all politics whatever, and to restrict himself



entirely to the specific work of the Christian ministry. And with these explanations and these expressions—with the frankest, most heartfelt apology for everything of which complaint has been made, he trusts the Editor of the *Scotsman* will be satisfied ; and *for ever abjuring politics*, the present correspondence may be allowed to bear fruit in his specific field of the Christian ministry.”

It may be thought that the grammar of this passage is as faulty as the rev. gentleman's Christian practice. But everybody can see what it means. He was informed in reply that his apology was accepted with pleasure, and that the matter would not again be alluded to. A letter of thanks closed the correspondence. In that letter there was a reiteration of the assurance that never again would the writer meddle with politics. Alas ! his conviction of what is due to the Christian ministry has not been strong enough to enable him to keep his word. I have seen letters published in newspapers favouring Home Rule which bear internal evidence that they come from his desk, and on many occasions he has figured at political meetings. His good resolutions held, I believe, for a year ; perhaps for two. He is now as sure of the duty of “ the Christian minister ” to interfere and take active part in the political sphere, as, under conviction of dishonourable conduct, he was sure of the opposite when he wrote to me.

So far as I know, other ministers have not allowed their political feelings to lead them into anonymous letter writing ; but they have allowed those feelings

to lead them into speech-making and appearances at public meetings which, to quote the words of my correspondent, are not within "the specific work of the Christian ministry." It is for them to reconcile the politician and the minister in their own persons, if they can. The general opinion is, I am convinced, that they may be good politicians or good ministers, but they cannot be both.

The last passage shows how difficult it is for an Old Newspaper Hand to get away from the Leading Article. He must preach in his own way. Sometimes he does so with much interruption. That is to say, the Leading Article is produced in the intervals between callers. It is all very well for your Social Philosopher to write thoughtful, and sometimes unintelligible, treatises in a pleasant study, without having to break off in the middle of a sentence to answer a question or to receive a visitor. The Editor of a newspaper who writes Leading Articles has no such opportunity. He has all sorts and conditions of men, and sometimes of women, coming to him for advice, or to get printed favours, or to ask questions. Now and then these visitors are noteworthy, as in one case that occurred in my experience some years ago.

Shortly after midnight, when I had just begun an article, the porter came into my room, and said, "Mr. M'Leod wants to see you, sir."

"Who is Mr. M'Leod?" I asked with some impatience.

"Don't know, sir."

"What is he like?"

"He's an old man, lame."

"Oh, well, bring him up."

Up came Mr. M'Leod. He was a small, elderly man, who could walk only with the help of two sticks, on which he leaned heavily. He hirpled into my room, and stood at the end of my writing-table. He declined the chair I offered him, saying that he preferred to stand. He seemed to be somewhat embarrassed, and, anxious to get to business, I asked, "What can I do for you?"

"I have come," he said, "to offer you a great discovery."

I bowed, and he went on:

"It has already been made known to the Speaker of the House of Commons. But I do not think it can get sufficient publicity through him. It is of great importance to mankind, and I thought I would offer it to you. In the columns of the *Scotsman* it would become known to all the world."

Again I bowed, and, with a strong suspicion of my visitor's good faith, I asked, "What is the nature of the discovery?"

"Sir, I have discovered the means of preventing any one from dying. If my discovery be made known, nobody need die unless he chooses."

The murder was out; but how was I to get the poor fellow away? "Do you really desire me to publish your discovery?" I asked.

"Yes, I do; it is for the good of the world."

"I will do no such thing; take it away, there are many people I want to die."

Not a word more did that poor fellow say to me. The brutal declaration had stunned him. I shall never forget the look of pained perplexity that came over his small, vaguely thoughtful face. He turned round and scrambled out of the room, and I was left alone. Never again did a word about the discovery reach me. It was a pity I did not take what he had to offer, and get him away with less abruptness. But allowances must be made. When you have an article to write after midnight, and the paper has to be at press before three o'clock in the morning, you do not welcome visitors. The fewer of them the better.

Rather worse in some ways than the harmless lunatic caller is the active lunatic letter-writer. In two or three cases, letters, plainly written by a lunatic, have come to me day by day for months together. It was not the same lunatic in each case. There was no indication that the letters came from a lunatic asylum; the writers appeared to be out in the world. One set of the letters contained a curious mixture of words and figures. The writer might have been planning cryptograms. Nothing could be made of them by myself or any of my colleagues. They came daily for months. Another set was widely different. They were written in a beautifully clear hand. Many of them had finely drawn geometrical diagrams, by way of introduction to the strangest problems. Some were literary essays, in



which there were more than traces of sane thought. Some were sonnets or other poems. One post brought me from this writer twelve sonnets—one for each month of the year, an essay on Pope, I think, and a wonderful demonstration of some hydraulic invention. Nothing could surpass the neatness and care with which they had all been prepared. The sonnets were better than many I have seen printed. But running through all—sonnets, essay, invention—there was the thread of hopeless insanity. I have not heard from that correspondent for several years.

Late hours of work are unavoidable where a morning daily newspaper has to be got out. Sometimes this fact leads to misunderstanding as to the character of the worker. He is seen going home in the morning, and he is mistaken for a night reveller. One morning, more than thirty years ago, I was walking home in London. It was a fine morning, bright and light. At a particular point on my way a police sergeant was endeavouring to induce a well-dressed young fellow, who was not sober, to go home. Just as I passed, the sergeant, speaking to the young man, but looking at me with the eye of reproach, said, "Go home, sir. Take my advice, and go home. It's time all *respectable* people were at home." The sarcasm of that word "respectable" crushed me. I went on with bowed head.

Another time, a kindly policeman entered into talk with me as I neared my home one morning. I had recently removed into the neighbourhood.

My friend told me, "We couldn't make you out at first, sir. We watched you pretty close, and couldn't make you out. Now we know it's all right; you're one of them press fellows." Evidently there is not in the police mind, or there was not in that police mind, the reverence for the press which one hears expressed at times, when the toast is proposed near the end of a dinner, by one who has well eaten and well drunken.

Another street adventure of mine brought home to me in a striking way the more or less unpleasant conviction that years were leaving their mark upon me. On a fine May morning I was walking home along Clerk Street in Edinburgh. The air was pleasantly warm and delightfully fresh after a hot night in the editorial room. A set of students—medical or divinity, I know not which—had been enjoying themselves all night in the room of one or more of their number. The window of that room was wide open. Two or three of the students, pipe in mouth, were leaning out of it. As I came into view on the other side of the street, I was greeted thus:—"For shame, old man!" "Go home to your wife, old man!" "Oh, for shame, old man!" "Go home, go home, old man!" Thus they pelted me as long as I was within hearing of them. Could the fact that he was looking old be more strikingly brought before any man?

That incident was but the beginning of a course of warnings that I must no longer think of myself as young or middle-aged. One autumn a little later, I was spending an angling holiday at Tongue, in

Sutherland. There were, among the other guests at the hotel, two young fellows, neither of them far from twenty years of age, one way or the other. A stormy week came up. How well I remember that week! The wind blew a gale from the north-east: rain fell heavily. It was all but impossible to get out on the lochs, but my boat happened to be hauled up at the Shepherd's Bay in Loch Loyal. That bay was a little sheltered. The heavy waves that coursed along the loch were barred by its northern headland. Spite of rain and wind I went out every day, and every day—simply fishing across the bay, and pulling back for a fresh drift—I got a good basket. One evening when, after changing my soaked garments for dry ones, I was coming down the stairs of the hotel, I heard the landlord talking thus to one of the young fellows: "Look there, Mr. C——," he was saying, while he pointed to a great dish of fine trout that I had brought home; "look there. That is a good basket brought in by an Old Gentleman, while you young men dare not face the weather. *He* does not fear a shower of rain or a gust of wind, though he is old." It was painful to me; but it showed me myself as I was seen by others. The landlord's lesson was taken to heart by the young man. Next day, though the wind was as high as ever, and the rain as plentiful, he was out on the loch. But he had no such shelter and hot corner as I had. He was drifted to the lower—or upper—end of the loch, and had to go ashore with no trout and soaked clothes.

## CHAPTER XXV

More angling recollections—Loch Leven trout—Fishing poor compared with some Highland lochs—Tongue and its waters—John Ross—Salmon *v.* Trout fishing—A reproof—The poacher—Tossing and trouting—The piety of the ghillie—A ghillie's praise—John Stewart—Loch Maree—Sir Molyneux Nepean—Minnow *v.* Fly—A change—How to avoid midges—A curious trouting experience—Angling evenings—South Uist—The Howmore.

VERY few lovers of angling are ignorant of the merits of Loch Leven trout. Indeed, many people who are not anglers—who never cast a fly in their lives—know these fish. For have they not been netted and sold in London and elsewhere? To me they always seem to have an earthy flavour which I do not like. They are bottom feeders, and I am not an admirer of the bottom of Loch Leven. Many trout are taken out of Loch Leven that are not Loch Leven trout. I am not skilled in natural history, but, on the strength of evidence given in a case at Stirling, I may venture to say that the true Loch Leven trout is a land-locked sea-trout. The evidence on which this assertion is founded was artfully obtained. A certain person was charged with taking fish of the salmon tribe out of the Teith



(I think) when he ought not, or had no right, to have done so. The defence was that the fish taken were not of the salmon tribe. An expert—from the British Museum, I believe—was called by the prosecution and declared they were sea-going fish. For the defence two or three fish were put before him, and he was asked to say what they were. He pronounced two of them to be sea-trout. They really were Loch Leven trout with the scales rubbed off. The explanation of the mistake was that Loch Leven trout must be land-locked sea-trout.

There are many fish taken out of the loch that are nothing more than the ordinary brown trout of the streams. They come into the loch from the waters that flow into it, and they thrive amazingly. Manifestly the food obtainable by fish in the loch is, for them, rich and plentiful. No matter whether the trout be the true Loch Leven or the common brown *salmo fario*, they are pink-fleshed. The true Loch Leven is silvery; the brown intruder is creamy yellow. My experience is that the latter grows the larger.

To my thinking, Loch Leven is not so satisfactory as an angling resort as are several Highland lochs with which I am acquainted. Angling always seems to me a sort of business in the Kinross lake. You are admitted by the gate, so to speak, into the slaughter-house, where you can be your own butcher. Most frequently you do not find many fish to kill. They are there in great numbers, but they will not come to your lure. If you are specially brutal, you

will discard the fly and put out the artificial minnow. There are men who go to the loch who would, I believe, use a net, if they dared to do so. It is the fish they are after, and nothing else; to them the first and last thing is to get fish. Old Izaak would never have regarded one of them as a "contemplative man." They prize a trout caught on a minnow as much as a trout caught with a fly! They are bored with little casting when the rise is not on. All this I can understand, though I do not admire it; and if it be possible to get to another water where the angler is more in evidence than the butcher, to that water let me go.

Now there are several lochs known to me in the far north where you fish freely, amid wild scenery, and land to take your luncheon and to walk about; where the fish may be smaller than the average Loch Leven, but are as red-fleshed and are sweeter to eat. My taste leads me to prefer these northern lochs as angling resorts. On an average you will get there a better basket than you will get at Loch Leven, and you will get it without resort to trolling. I do not know what they may be now, but I know that a few years ago Loch Loyal, Loch Craggie, and Loch Slam, near Tongue, were capital fishing lochs. Then, there was a wonderful star-shaped lake called Loch Hallam, lying at the base of the southmost peak of Ben Loyal. From that water I have got many large baskets of good fish.

When I first went to Tongue, my ghillie was old

John Ross. Everybody who has been in that part of the world knows him, or knew him, for I believe he is dead now. He was a thorough sportsman. One day I had been fishing in Loch Slam, out of which the river Borgie flows. There are falls on the Borgie, but salmon leap them and you often get one in the lochs that empty themselves through the river. A little time before my visit the lessee of the shooting and of the fishing on the river had thought to make Loch Slam a salmon pool, and to that end had put a wire barrier across the burn that connected Slam with Craggie. When I saw this barrier, it was broken in places. I asked John how it had got broken. "Oh," said he, with strong pulls at the guys that fastened it to the bank, "it was the storms of winter." His pulls and their effects showed me what were the storms of winter.

On the particular day to which allusion has been made, Loch Slam had been unproductive. It was a blazing hot summer day, and the trout preferred the cool depths to the surface. John proposed that we should go down the Borgie and try for a salmon. Was not the water preserved? I asked. "Oh no; at least any gentleman who likes can fish it." This was not true; but John was a little given to pious frauds. I did not know the truth, but was reluctant to go; he persuaded me, and away we went. After a walk of about a couple of miles, John began to put up the rod, and this being done, and a fly carefully chosen, I was directed to cast. I tried, and could not; the reason being, not ignorance, but flies.

They were in clouds. It is literally true that I could not see the water because of them. They fell on me and made fishing impossible. John was not to be discouraged by any such trifle. Neither was he to be discouraged by the non-appearance of any fish. Farther down the river we went casting over every pool. In vain. The heat grew hotter; the flies grew more numerous. I struck at last; not a step farther would I go. If John liked to take the rod while I rested, he might do so. He did like, and soon he disappeared, returning about an hour and a half later, with no fish, but a smile of welcome. I was trying to drive away the flies with tobacco smoke. He was full of regret that I had not seen the fish he raised in the Falls Pool. I did not believe in that salmon then, and I do not believe in it now.

Humbly the suggestion was made by me that we should return to our boat on Loch Slam. John consented, and we trudged back. As we neared the boat John moralised. "There is shentlemans," he said, "that likes partridge-shooting better than deer-stalking, and there is shentlemans as likes trout-fishing better than salmon-fishing." "Well, John," I asked of malice, knowing what the answer would be, "which do you prefer?" "I never goes for a bird when I can get at a stag; and all the trout in the lochs is not worth a salmon. I would rather stalk a deer for a week than shoot all the partridges in the country." I believed him. He had stalked many a deer, and had eaten much surreptitious venison.



Not far from Tongue there is a loch called (I think) Loch-an-Deairig. It is not a large sheet of water. One side of it is precipitous. Beyond that side is the moor on the slopes of Ben Loyal. It is not exactly a deer forest; but deer frequent it. Once when John was expansive because of a good day's sport and a touch of the flask, he told me of a foray he and two or three others had made on the moor to the east of Loch-an-Deairig. They were after deer; they found some, and drove them over the precipice at the loch side. "There was eleven of them," said John. "They was all dead." "How did you get the bodies away?" I asked. "Oh, they was all gone in the morning." "I suppose meat was plentiful about that time, John?" John smacked his lips and looked volumes.

Of course John was pious. He was a Free Churchman, with a holy horror of the Erastianism of the Establishment. The Free Church was some two miles away from the hotel, and most of the villagers who went to church had to pass the hotel door. I did not often see John on the Sunday morning. But I know of his piety, not merely because of his own assurances on the subject, but because of practical demonstrations. One Monday morning, when I got down to breakfast, and as a preliminary walked outside, I found John sitting there prompt for his day's work. "Where are we goin' to-day, sir?" he asked.

"Loch Loyal," said I. "We tossed for boats last night, and I got Loch Loyal."

"You what?" asked John in horrified tones.

"We tossed for boats."

"Last night?"

"Yes, last night."

"It was a sin, and we shall hev no luck; we needn't go."

"Surely it is not so bad as that," said I; "we will hope for the best."

To Loch Loyal we went. We got a full, even overflowing basket. John was delighted. As we got down at the hotel door that evening I said, "You see, John, the tossing last night did no harm."

"Ah, sir, it wass wrong. But do it again next Sabbath night. Maybe we shall get another good basket!"

Another illustration of the piety of the ghillie in those parts may be pardoned. John Munro, as good a fellow as ever lived, told me the story. He was ghillie to Mr. P——, a gentleman given to strong liquor and strong language. One day there was a cloudless sky with very little wind, and Mr. P——'s temper was as inflamed as his nose. "Damn the sky," he exploded. John expostulated—"Sir, you've damned me, and you've damned the boat; you've damned the fish, and you've damned the water and the wind, and I hev said nothing. But when you damn the sky you damn what God made, and I won't stand it. I shall row you ashore." And he did.

One year, as John Ross's services were not

available, I had a ghillie whose name was Peter. Probably he had a surname; I never heard it. He was a tailor by trade: I know, because he always carried needle and thread for the repair of an injured garment. He was a capital boatman—most industrious, and most eager for sport. A man more reckless of his personal health and comfort I never saw. He never hesitated to jump into the water if that seemed to be the shortest way of getting what was required. I expostulated with him, and talked of the lasting torments of rheumatism. He only laughed. I have heard that subsequently, when acting as ghillie to Mr. William Black, he injured himself and was lamed for life. His name is mentioned here because in one respect he illustrated an attribute of the ghillie. He had more industry than, so far as my experience goes, is common with his class; and he was in nowise behind his fellows in a liking for whisky.

The coffee-room of the hotel at Tongue looked out upon the main road, and it was the custom for the ghillies to muster under the windows to await their "shentlemen." One gloriously fine morning I entered the coffee-room to find the windows open and no other guest. As I stood for a moment, the voices of the ghillies came in with the sound of angry passion. Peter's voice rose above the others. "You call your man a shentleman? Him! Look at his flask! Look at my shentleman's flask! I could get drunk every night if I liked." There was no answer. The size of the flask was con-

clusive! Peter, in his honest zeal for the character of his temporary employer, maligned me. My flask did not hold quite a pint; and I never had a drunken boatman, save once, on Loch Tay, and I had not given him a drop of alcoholic liquor.

My first visit to Tongue was due to an acquaintanceship with the hotel-keeper, made some four or five years previously. He had been the landlord of the Loch Maree Hotel. He was its first landlord, and I chanced to go there in the first year of his tenancy. No man could make visitors more happy and comfortable than did John Stewart. He was a big, stout man—as kindly, shrewd, well-informed a man as you would meet in a week's travel. He was not for ever bothering his visitors, but was always ready to give them advice and assistance in the matter of amusement. He had a large young family. There was no school within ten miles of the hotel; and he went to Tongue to be near a school. Thither, in holiday time, I followed him. His family—rather his desire to see his boys (all the children save one were boys) settled—made him buy land in New Zealand and put them to farming there. Poor fellow, he died soon after he had got to his land.

The hotel at Loch Maree—or rather, to be more accurate, the Loch Maree Hotel—is beautifully situated half-way along the loch, on its south bank. You step out of the hotel upon a short pier and into your boat. Indigenous birch clothes the steep sides of the loch. In front, half-way across, are islands.



A long stony point runs out on your right as you embark, and among the rocky masses at its end there are sandy bays or small lochs in which you may dream away a sunny afternoon with glorious surroundings. A little way off to your right, and on the other side of the loch, rises Ben Slioch in massive majesty. Hills are all around. Certainly Loch Maree is the loveliest sheet of water I have seen in Scotland. My first view of it can never fade out of my memory. My son and I had travelled from the south and had arrived at Auchnasheen, the nearest station on the Dingwall and Skye line, late one summer evening, hours after schedule time. We had twenty miles to drive to the Loch Maree Hotel. Stewart had sent a machine and pair to meet us, and it was waiting at the station. For several miles the road winds upwards in steady ascent. Then suddenly you turn a sharp corner and all the length of Glen Docherty and Loch Maree is before you. As we turned that corner the sun was sinking in the west straight before us. Its level beams brought out every island in the loch like an emerald set in silver. The silver became gold. The hills on both sides were bathed in golden light. It darkened to purple, and then little but dim twilight prevailed. Grandeur, beauty, peace, were in that scene. We could not speak. A solemn hush seemed to have fallen on the earth and the waters. It was some minutes before the horses, which had been stopped, were started again, and once more the journey was pursued.

Not only is Loch Maree beautiful, but there is splendid sea-trout fishing in it after the end of July and to the end of September. Thousands of salmon run through the loch to spawning waters beyond it; yet a salmon is very rarely taken in the loch itself. The assertion is made that no salmon has ever been known to be taken in it. That is a mistake. I have seen at least one clean salmon and two salmon kelts captured in its waters. Sea-trout are there in countless numbers.

The first time I went to the loch Sir Molyneux Nepean, a Dorsetshire baronet and an old soldier, was staying at the hotel. He was one of the most amusing men I ever met. His stories were innumerable, though they could not all be put into print. He had been wounded in action, and could not bear the fatigue of standing to cast a fly. Therefore he trolled the day through with parr tail for a bait. When a friend and myself were putting up our rods before going afloat, and were preparing casts of flies, he looked on with an eye of pity. "Going to fly-fish, are you?" he said. "It's a mistake. The fly here is a delusion and a snare. The fish won't look at anything but bait." As a matter of fact he was then right. Every day he brought in twice as many fish as any of us caught with the fly.

But there came a change. Some three or four years later I expected to meet him as I had done on as many consecutive holidays. I had gone by sea to Gairloch, where a trap from the hotel met

me. When I landed, the driver gave me a note from Sir Molyneux. It ran something like this :

DEAR COOPER—The loch has gone to the devil. Not a fish will look at the bait. I am off. You had better go too. Till we next meet at Loch Tay, good-bye.

He was right : the fish would not look at bait trolling. They would take the fly greedily, and we made excellent baskets.

Sir Molyneux Nepean was the maker of a joke which subsequently Mr. Barrie, to whom I had told it, put into the mouth of Mr. Toole in *Walker, London*. On a beautiful Sunday morning, when there was not a breath of wind and midges were in millions, Sir Molyneux and I sat on stones near to the hotel pier. To us there came a tall tourist, who was flapping himself with hands and handkerchief in the vain effort to drive off the midges.

"Midges seem to trouble you," said Sir Molyneux.

"They do ; I suffer horribly."

"Perhaps you wash your face in a morning?"

"I should think I do," was the indignant response.

"Ah ! I never do. The midges don't bite me."

The pained disgust shown on that tourist's countenance I shall not soon forget.

I had a theory about fishing in Loch Maree. It was that after a spate you should go down the loch towards the sea, and each day fish higher. The argument—possibly foolish—was that the sea-trout

came into the loch with the spate, and ascended it by degrees. One day, in accordance with this theory, I had gone down the loch to a beautiful sandy bay on the south shore. It seemed to me to be certain that trout must be lying there. The breeze blew across the bay from the western end of it. We rowed carefully over, and I began to fish on the drift back. Never a fish rose. I was confident the trout were there, and I told the boatmen to pull back. I left my flies on the water over the stern of the boat. Scarcely had we begun to move when a trout rose to the trailing flies, and was hooked and landed. When we moved again another took the flies and was caught. Before we got back across the bay we had five splendid sea-trout. Again I cast over it and not a fish rose. We returned trailing the flies and got three or four trout. A third time I cast over the water and not a fish rose, and a third time trailing the flies we got trout. By now I had reached the conclusion that my bad casting was the cause of the trout not rising when asked to do so in orthodox fashion. Close by, in another lovely bay, a friend, Mr. G——, was fishing. He cast beautifully, and was a most expert angler. I called to him and told him to come and try what he could do. He came, and his experience was exactly the same as mine. The trout would not look at the fly cast; they greedily took the fly trailing.

What pleasant evenings I have had at the Nest on the Tweed! What delightful days have been



mine on Loch Tay, where frost and wind could not cool the hope of getting salmon! Many of them I have got. Thanks to the Marquis of Breadalbane, my fishing in Loch Tay has been in the reserved waters, and it has been good. But always I have been doubtful as to whether most pleasure comes from the angling itself or from the stories of your daily experiences told in the evening. Perhaps the two are not altogether the same. Fishing calls for industry, story-telling calls for invention. Your fish are of the usual size when they come out of the water; they grow in weight as years roll on, when the story of them is being told over the fire and with a pipe. A dear friend of mine once caught a trout that weighed a pound and a half. It grew to five and six pounds; and when I last heard of it the weight was "over nine pounds; I ought to have had it stuffed!"

The best trout-fishing I ever enjoyed was got in South Uist. Sir Reginald and Lady Gordon Cathcart own the island. They have a delightful house on it called Grogary; and those who have the pleasure of staying there can have fishing galore. Somebody has said of the island that all the land is water, and all the water is land. The description is a little confused, but it conveys a fair idea of the place. There is but one river, so-called, in the island, the Howmore. It is more like a wide ditch than a river. It is oddly serpentine in its short course, and there is scarcely any perceptible current in it. But in the autumn it swarms with sea-trout

and salmon. They seem almost to jostle one another. If you chance on a good day, when there is a fair breeze, with a dull sky, and perhaps a little rain, you can hook out any number of fish from two to ten pounds in weight. On such a day they rise greedily to the fly; on other days they will not look at it. The Howmore Loch, which is but one of a chain of lochs, empties itself into the river through a culvert under the public road. Sir Reginald Cathcart had a grating put at this culvert in the earlier months of the sea-trout season, and the result was to make the Howmore River a fully-stocked pool. Trout of two or three pounds could get through the grating; the others had to remain till it was taken off.

The Howmore was not my greatest pleasure. There is a sheet of water within about half a mile of Grogary where I loved to cast my line. The Gaelic name of it I forget; it came to be known by my name. The trout were better in all respects than Loch Leven trout. They ran larger; they were quite as shapely; they were delicately red-fleshed; and certainly the best trout for the table I ever ate. On one visit to Grogary I fished that loch on seven days, for about four hours or five hours a day. I got 139 trout weighing 141 lbs.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Mr. W. P. Adam—His work as Whip—His honesty of purpose—A Liberal mistake in Midlothian—1874 to 1880—Mr. Gladstone's resignation of leadership—Mr. Forster and the Marquis of Hartington—An interview with Mr. Forster—His anxiety as to the leadership—Impressions of Mr. Forster—Mr. Adam's work—His difficulties—Liberal doubts and fears—London and Lord Beaconsfield—Sudden announcement of Dissolution—An incident of the time—A conversation with Lord Granville—His doubts as to the election—Sir William Harcourt and Liberal prospects—Mr. Adam's estimates of result—The new Ministry—Mr. Adam's place in the Liberal Government—His disappointment.

IN an earlier chapter, a conversation between myself and Mr. W. P. Adam (afterwards Sir W. P. Adam) has been related. I made his acquaintance soon after I came to Edinburgh. He was at that time the manager of the affairs of the Liberal party in Scotland; and he performed the duties of that office with diligence, tact, and efficiency. It has been my lot to have relations with many politicians, especially during the last thirty years. It is safe to say that by no one of them has there been shown more complete disinterestedness and more earnestness of purpose than were shown by Mr. Adam. He was a kindly man, whom all who came to know him learned to esteem.

There is a general opinion, which I am not prepared to say is wholly unsupported by facts, that those who have to deal with the management of a political party's affairs, and with its funds, are not remarkable for scrupulous consciences. It is supposed that they act on the principle that all is fair in politics and electioneering. I am sure that was not the view of Mr. Adam. He did not care to adopt methods which he could not defend before the whole world. On one occasion—the time need not be more definitely stated—a proposal was made on the Liberal side in Scotland to adopt a device which had long been used by the Conservatives. The *Scotsman* had denounced that party for using the device. Mr. Adam came to me and told me of the proposal. I said it was wrong in itself; and added that if this was not a sufficient reason to induce those who made the proposal to abandon it, the further consideration that it would be disastrous in its results might affect them. Mr. Adam told me that he entirely agreed with me, and that he should oppose the adoption of the proposal. Subsequently he said he had done so, but that he had been overruled. It was some satisfaction to both of us that those who overruled him suffered largely in their pockets for their unwisdom; and that the party itself did not suffer was mainly due to important constitutional changes which were shortly afterwards made.

The general election of 1868 was in progress when my acquaintance with Mr. Adam began.



That election resulted in a large Liberal majority, and, until 1874, Mr. Adam kept all the party machinery in Scotland in working order. Some seats were lost to the Conservatives in 1874, and over the whole of the United Kingdom they had a large majority. The first effect of this election, so far as the Liberal party was concerned, was that Mr. Gladstone retired from the position of leader. He pleaded age, and insisted that he had earned retirement. Mr. Adam told me that he had no doubt the real reason of the resignation was chagrin at defeat; and it is only fair to say that this was the general opinion. The most prominent Liberal statesmen pressed Mr. Gladstone to reconsider his decision, but he was obdurate and refused to do so. His retirement, he said, was final. Still an open door was kept for his return; it was determined that before taking definite steps as to the leadership the party should allow Mr. Gladstone a year to consider whether he would persist in the course he had taken. At the end of the year he still refused to continue in the leadership, and the question then arose, Who was to take up his work?

Mr. Adam had all the time been working for the party with steady loyalty and with good effect; but he had not been able to reconcile all differences and remove all difficulties. My impression is that he did not wish to act in any way that might appear to pledge him to one person more clearly than to another. He was for the party, not for any individual. Of course he had his own opinions as to the

leadership, and I know what they were. He thought that the Marquis of Hartington (now the Duke of Devonshire) was the statesman most likely to keep the party united and strong. But he never allowed this view to interfere with the impartial discharge of his duties as party Whip. There was a desire in some quarters that Mr. William Edward Forster should be chosen leader. At least one great difficulty stood in the way of choosing him. The Nonconformists had never forgiven him for the Education Bill of 1871. They were very sore on that matter, though recently they have shown themselves just as sore when an attempt was made to partially remodel the system advocated and established by Mr. Forster. Still he had many friends, and there were good men and true who thought that the Liberal party would be stronger with him as leader than with the Marquis of Hartington.

Immediately before the meeting at which the question was settled I was in London, and Mr. Adam asked me to see Mr. Forster. That gentleman had desired an interview with me. We met at the Athenæum Club, of which Mr. Forster was a member. I well remember the inhospitable way in which that club then treated "strangers." They were shown into a little room off the main hall—a room that seemed to be more like a store-place for waste-paper and lumber than a place where members might receive their friends. I had never met Mr. Forster before, but I was well acquainted with his career. My opinion was that he would not

unite the party so well as the Marquis of Hartington, but I also thought that he might have the qualities of leadership. My interview with him led me to think otherwise. He was very anxious on the subject. He was resentful because of the opposition to him. He thought he had earned the right to possess the confidence of the party, and he did not think the party would be benefited by having as leader a statesman who might and probably would be called to the House of Lords before long. I pointed out to him that so far as he was concerned this probability might not be a disadvantage ; if the Marquis of Hartington went to the House of Lords, the leadership of the House of Commons might fall into his hands. "It is ill waiting for dead men's shoes," was his reply. "That is true," I said, "but the suggestion was your own ; only I put it as constituting no objection to the Marquis of Hartington's leadership at present." He admitted that this was the case ; but he was not soothed when I told him that in my opinion the Marquis of Hartington would command the support of the party against him. Everybody knows that he had to retire from his candidature for the leadership ; and there can be no doubt he did so because he saw his own chances were hopeless.

My impression of Mr. Forster gathered at that interview was that he was as honest a man as breathed, but that he had not the qualities of a first-class or even a second-class statesman. He did not appear to me to have sufficient breadth of view, and

I was convinced that if he became leader there would be disorder in the House of Commons and in the party, because of his sensitiveness and want of tact. Long afterwards I had a conversation with him in the House of Commons, and recalled our interview at the Athenæum Club. He then said that time had convinced him it was well for himself and for the Liberal party that he had not been chosen leader; but other matters had altered the situation, and as to those other matters—Mr. Gladstone's return and his policy—he was outspoken in an unfriendly fashion.

From 1874 to 1880 Mr. Adam worked incessantly as chief Whip of the Liberal party, then in Opposition. The conditions were for the most part discouraging. The retirement of Mr. Gladstone and his fierce re-entry into active political life in the course of the Bulgarian War had not made the position of Whip one easy to fill. The nominal leader of the party was the Marquis of Hartington. He was responsible for the management of the Opposition in the House of Commons. Yet Mr. Gladstone, both in the House and out of it, virtually assumed the position of leader. I am not discussing the wisdom or unwisdom of his course, or the right or wrong of it; I am simply stating a fact. Mr. Adam many times told me of the difficulties he had to encounter. The Marquis of Hartington desired to have the affairs of the party managed in such a way that if he laid down the leadership it might be felt that he had neither shirked responsibility on the



one hand nor put impediments in the way of Mr. Gladstone on the other. "No man can serve two masters." That was Mr. Adam's difficulty. He knew what the Marquis of Hartington desired; he did not always or often know what Mr. Gladstone might demand. Still he worked steadily on, and long before 1880 he saw the change that was coming, or had come over the mind of the country. He was one of very few in high quarters who did see it. Among Parliamentarians there was a general impression that the Beaconsfield Government had not only retained the confidence of the country but had strengthened it.

Most men of middle age will remember the general tone of the newspapers in London at that time. Those of them that professed to be Liberal were either gloomily despondent or openly supporting the Ministry. Earlier in this book it has been told how, in conversation with Mr. John Morley, soon after 1880, I pointed to the difference in tone between the newspapers out of London and the newspapers in it. That difference was most marked. London had taken to Lord Beaconsfield, and had set itself to a great extent against Mr. Gladstone and against his denunciations of the policy of the Government. The newspapers out of London had not done so. With one or two exceptions all the Liberal papers were taking Mr. Gladstone's tone. Still, so far as could be gathered, there was not much belief that when the general election came, as come it must, Lord Beaconsfield would be defeated.

Mr. Adam, fresh from London, used to say that he came to me for comfort. Unswervingly I held to the opinion that the Conservatives would be beaten, and beaten badly. That was his opinion; but it was not shared by any of the leaders in London.

It may be remembered that the dissolution in 1880 was announced without any preliminary warning. One evening, early in the session, Sir Stafford Northcote, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and was leading the House of Commons, intimated without notice the intention of the Government to dissolve Parliament as soon as the necessary business could be wound up. It chanced that I was in London that evening and in the members' lobby of the House of Commons. Mr. Frederick Clifford, who was then assistant editor of the *Times*, and an old acquaintance of mine, was there also. We got talking over the political situation. We did not agree as to the strength or weakness of the Government, or as to the Ministerial intentions. They had introduced several Bills of importance; but, as it was the last possible session of the Parliament, I was pretty certain the measures were only intended for show. I said to Mr. Clifford that in my opinion the dissolution was near. He laughed at the suggestion. "Look at the Bills they have introduced," he said. "I have looked at them," was my reply; "and I am convinced they are for use in electioneering as proofs of good intentions, but are not meant to be passed." Clifford laughed at me, and would not accept my view. He went across the lobby to speak to some

one else; and almost immediately afterwards there was a rush out of the House. Mr. A. M. Sullivan led the way, running across the lobby from the doors of the House to the central lobby. He was making for the telegraph office. Several other members, mostly Irishmen so far as I remember, followed him. In an instant thereafter the news ran through the lobby like an electric shock, "Northcote has announced an immediate dissolution!" It was in truth a shock to many people. Clifford came to me and said, "Well, you were right. What will be the result of the election?" My reply was that the Conservatives would be beaten. He did not agree with me. In that respect he was like almost everybody else except Mr. Adam.

There was a general opinion that Mr. Gladstone had destroyed the chances of success of the Liberal party, if there ever had been any. Two nights after the announcement of the dissolution, I dined with Lord Granville in Carlton House Terrace. He was very anxious on the subject of the election. Mr. Adam had told him that I was more than hopeful.

"Don't you think Lord Beaconsfield has carried the country with him?" he asked.

"No, I do not," was my reply; "I am confident that Mr. Gladstone has won the country."

It must be remembered that the first Midlothian Campaign had then been carried through.

"You can have little idea," I said, "of the effect which the speeches in Midlothian have produced."

"Perhaps not," he replied. "Indeed I confess

I have thought that Mr. Gladstone had overdone the work, and that the country was a little tired of him."

"I do not think so; indeed I am convinced that such a view is mistaken."

"Well, I hope you may be right. Shall we win seats in Scotland?"

"Undoubtedly"; and I added how many I thought would be won. It afterwards turned out that I was under the mark.

"Suppose that there is a strong Liberal majority after the election, and a Liberal Government," I asked, "who is to be premier?"

"Who knows?" was the cautious reply.

I pointed out that Mr. Gladstone's resignation of leadership had never been withdrawn. "No," said Lord Granville, "but the leadership has been re-asserted."

The conversation was extremely interesting to me, because it seemed to show that Lord Granville did not expect the success of the party at the election, and was in grave doubt as to what might happen if it were successful.

Some two or three years afterwards, when Mr. Gladstone was in office, I met Sir Charles Dilke at a dinner party in Edinburgh. It was before his fall, and when he was a member of the Government. The conversation turned upon the election of 1880, and the opinions among politicians as to its probable result. I was surprised to hear Sir Charles Dilke say that he and Sir William Harcourt



were, he believed, the only men in London who had confidence in Mr. Gladstone's success at the polls. I had no means of knowing what Sir Charles Dilke had expected, but as to Sir William Harcourt I had the strongest reason to believe that he had expected failure, not success. That reason was his own declaration.

In the course of the week after Sir Stafford Northcote had announced the dissolution, I was on several occasions at the Central Liberal Office in Parliament Street. Mr. Craig Sellar was then taking an active part in the office under Mr. Adam. One day I was there when Sir William Harcourt came in. Of course we talked of election matters. Mr. Adam was in high spirits. He believed that the time of digging and watering was nearly over, and the time for gathering fruit at hand. Sir William was as gloomy as the virtuous but melancholy heavy father of a transpontine melodrama. He would not be comforted. Mr. Craig Sellar told him that Mr. Adam and myself believed that the result of the election would be a Liberal success. He bluntly declared that no sensible man could or would believe any such thing. Mr. Gladstone had damned whatever chance the party might have had, and that was very little. Beaconsfield would be back with a bigger majority than ever, and he deserved to be back. And so on, and so on. The storm rumbled along until Sir William took his departure.

It must be confessed that his pessimistic views were shared by the workers in the Central Liberal

Office. Mr. Craig Sellar, who was a shrewd, able man—one of the shrewdest and ablest I have known—was constitutionally inclined to pessimism in political affairs. Possibly he was always more hopeful than he professed to be, and spoke doubtfully lest he should mislead by appearing to be too sanguine. To me, even at the general election of 1886, when he sought to be returned again for Partick, he shook his head over the Unionist prospects, and especially over his own prospects. In 1880 he was encouraged by Mr. Adam to believe better things; but he was afraid of the election. At the meeting at the Central Liberal Office of which I have spoken, when Sir William Harcourt was present, Mr. Sellar said, "Nobody but you, Adam, and you, Cooper, believes in victory. As you are so confident, what do you expect the majority to be?"

It happened that I had been going over the lists of candidates in all the constituencies, and had formed an opinion as to the majority. Mr. Adam had been going over the lists almost every day. He said in answer to Mr. Sellar's suggestion that he was quite willing to tell what were his expectations as to a majority. He did not know what mine were, and he, or somebody present, proposed that we should each write the number of the majority we expected without either seeing what the other wrote. We did so; and when the papers were compared it was found that we were within two or three of each other. I forget which was the higher; but I know that we were both high, and that, high as we were, the actual

majority at the election was still higher, though not by many. At the time we were laughed at as too sanguine. But Mr. Sellar subsequently told me that the identity of expectation between Mr. Adam and myself had made them all more hopeful.

Everybody knows that there was a large Liberal majority at the election of 1880. It is further matter of history that when Lord Beaconsfield resigned he recommended the Queen to send for the Marquis of Hartington or Earl Granville. In some quarters he has been severely censured for this advice. To me it seems that he could not have given any other. It has been said that he ought to have advised Her Majesty to send for Mr. Gladstone, and that the advice actually given was due to jealousy and bitterness of spirit. Nothing would make me believe any such thing. Mr. Gladstone had formally resigned leadership in 1874; he had renewed or reasserted his resignation in 1875. He had never formally withdrawn it. The Marquis of Hartington had been chosen leader, and had discharged the duties of that office till the dissolution. Lord Granville was the leader in the House of Lords. How could Lord Beaconsfield, with any regard for traditional usage, have passed them by? He did what it was his duty to do.

In saying so much I seem to have strayed into controversy, and assuredly that is no part of my desire. But what has been written may remain because it helps to an understanding of what followed the Beaconsfield resignation. The Marquis of

Hartington and Lord Granville were sent for, and they recommended the Queen to send for Mr. Gladstone. There were and still are many people in the country who thought and think now it was a grave misfortune for the Liberal party that the advice was given. The question is not worth discussion; might-have-beens are vain delusions. I asked Mr. Adam at the time why Lord Hartington had not undertaken to form a Government. Mr. Adam told me that such a course was felt to be impossible. "Why?" I asked. He gave me several reasons. One was that Mr. Gladstone had in effect put himself before the country as the Liberal leader. Another was that, of course, Mr. Gladstone would not serve under any other statesman, and neither Lord Hartington nor any other possible member of a Government could regard with equanimity the prospect of Mr. Gladstone sitting behind him, an independent member in a condition of activity. The reasons were sufficient. My own opinion had all along been that Mr. Gladstone was, in the circumstances, the only possible premier.

It is certain that Mr. Adam expected Cabinet office in the new Ministry. He had worked for the party as no other man had worked. He was early and late in his strivings for it. He was a man of great ability. He had that coolness of judgment and that firmness of action which, I take it, go to make good administrators. Assuredly I had expected that he would be in the Cabinet with a Secretaryship. He was made President of the



Board of Works without a seat in the Cabinet. The disappointment was great. He was too loyal a man to rise up in revolt, as less scrupulous men would have done. He accepted the post. But his spirit was broken. I speak of this with personal knowledge. He kept a good face on the matter ; but he took the Governorship of Madras that he might get out of a position he detested. That his death was hastened by his disappointment in regard to the Liberal Ministry of 1880 I have always believed. I know he thought he had been treated with ingratitude. It is a small matter that in this respect my opinion coincided with his.

## CHAPTER XXVII

Mr. Gladstone—His candidature for Midlothian—Lord Rosebery's share in it—Doubts as to its wisdom—The 1879 Campaign—Lord Airlie and Sir George Campbell—The 1880 Campaign—Enthusiasm of the people—An interview with Mr. Gladstone in London—His failure to read newspapers—An illustration—The result of the election—The Disestablishment Question—A private deputation—A suggestion for safety—A walk with Mr. Gladstone—The cruise of the *Tantallon Castle*—News of defeat of the Rosebery Government—Anxiety on board ship—My last conversation with Mr. Gladstone.

It was not until 1879 that I made personal acquaintance with Mr. Gladstone. That was the year of his first Midlothian Campaign. There had been much dubiety about his coming to Scotland. That is to say, it had been doubted whether it was wise to induce him, prominent as he had been and was, to contest the seat for Midlothian. His seat at Greenwich was unsafe. Indeed it was hardly likely that in any circumstances he would contest that constituency again. Another seat had therefore to be found, and Midlothian was pitched upon; while Leeds also resolved to return him in absence if he could not be present. It is not a mere surmise of mine that Lord Rosebery was the guide in the choice of Midlothian. At that time the late Duke

of Buccleuch was the leader of the Scottish Conservatives. He had ruled their camp for many years, and had so ruled it that he had well deserved influence all over Scotland. Lord Rosebery might very properly aspire to a similar position in the Liberal camp. He was young, with brilliant abilities, backed by honourable ambition. There was no reason why he should not be the foremost figure in the Liberal party in Scotland. Midlothian had been, with one break, almost a preserve for the Duke of Buccleuch. If it could be wrested from him, not merely would a blow be struck at Conservatism, but the influence of Lord Rosebery would be increased, if he had a share in the campaign.

It is not possible for me to say that these were certainly the motives by which Lord Rosebery was influenced in the course he took. He had a profound admiration for Mr. Gladstone. The even then aged statesman had exercised a great influence over the young peer—an influence of character rather than of direct pressure. Unquestionably Mr. Gladstone was the greatest and first political figure of the time. Different constituencies had discarded him for reasons which no doubt they deemed sufficient; but his power in the country was not less. After retirement in 1874 and 1875, he had come forward again and had fought the Beaconsfield Government on its Russo-Turkish policy. It was scarcely doubtful that if Mr. Gladstone were returned to Parliament he would take up the leadership of the Liberal party,

though the Marquis of Hartington had been holding that position since 1874, and had discharged the duties of the post with singular ability and rare loyalty and fidelity. Here, then, were many reasons why Lord Rosebery should endeavour to get Mr. Gladstone to Midlothian. If he were elected, the Buccleuch influence would be lessened, and the Rosebery influence increased. The probabilities of election were great, considering Mr. Gladstone's position. The electors would know that if they gave him a majority they would have for their representative the leader of the Liberal party, if not the Premier of the United Kingdom. It was a prize worth playing for ; and it was played for and won.

There were doubters as to the wisdom of choosing Midlothian for Mr. Gladstone. It could not be called safe, and defeat was on all grounds most undesirable. Edinburgh was open and would be quite safe. These were the suggestions of the doubters. I heard them urged again and again by men who had not the courage of those who preferred the bolder scheme. A seat for Edinburgh would be a seat and little more. A seat for Midlothian would be a shattering of Conservatism for the time being, throughout Scotland. The boldness was justified by the result. Mr. Gladstone was returned, and all the Conservatives Scotland sent to the House of Commons might, as some wit said, have travelled there in a single compartment of a first-class railway carriage.



When Mr. Gladstone began his electioneering in 1879, I saw a good deal of him. He was the guest of Lord Rosebery at Dalmeny, and there were gatherings, social and for business purposes, almost every day. Dalmeny became for the time being a sort of Liberal Mecca, whither the faithful flocked from all quarters to do honour to their prophet. No one could fail to see that Mr. Gladstone enjoyed himself. The homage paid to him would have gratified any man. He made triumphal processions through Edinburgh. Hundreds of thousands of voices greeted him. Wayside cottages on country roads were decorated in his honour, and old men and women, young men and maidens in their cleanest and best, stood at their doors and cheered him as he drove past to places where he had speeches to make. I doubt whether any statesman ever had such popular honour done to him. It is a breach of continuity of narrative to say that seven years later there was a falling off in the demonstrations when Mr. Gladstone was a candidate once more. Even in 1885 he had not been so warmly received as in 1879 and 1880. In 1886 the people other than Irishmen were not demonstrative. In 1892, attempts to get up processions and displays like those of 1879 were abject failures.

All this is history. There were some incidents in the Campaigns of 1879 and 1880 which may not be so generally known. At one of Mr. Gladstone's meetings held in the Corn Exchange, Edinburgh, the late Earl of Airlie made a short speech in

proposing a vote of thanks to the candidate. Between Lord Airlie and Sir George Campbell there was a great personal likeness, and their voices, which could not be called harmonious, were scarcely distinguishable one from the other. When Mr. Gladstone got up to return thanks, he expressed his gratitude to his "honourable friend Sir George Campbell" for the kindness with which the vote had been proposed. The mistake was natural; but Lord Airlie was furiously indignant. The last man he cared to be likened to was Sir George Campbell, no doubt for the paradoxical reason that in voice and manner they were so much alike. Mr. Gladstone's attention was called to the mistake, and he apologised to Lord Airlie.

The next afternoon, Mr. Gladstone spoke at West Calder. A large dinner party had been invited to Dalmeny, among the guests being Lord Airlie. Mr. Gladstone was late in getting back from West Calder. All the guests were awaiting him in the library. At last he came, and foremost among those who stepped forward to greet him was Lord Airlie. "How do you do, Sir George?" said Mr. Gladstone; "I am very glad to see you." Lord Airlie was speechless.

The second Midlothian Campaign took place in 1880. Mr. Gladstone left London before the work of the session was all wound up, and his journey north was a prolonged triumph. He spoke at every station where the train stopped. Dense crowds were there to meet and hear him.

In Edinburgh his reception was enthusiastic. It was no manufactured welcome he received. Scotsmen, who are supposedly cold and undemonstrative—(the biggest of mistakes, it may be said)—showed how warmly they could greet the man who had won their profound admiration and esteem. Not flags and banners and decorations alone or chiefly proved the sincerity of their welcome. That was shown in their crowds, in their thunderous cheers, in the way in which bareheaded they received him. There is not a scrap of exaggeration in this statement. Mr. Gladstone's reception in the Heart of Midlothian was, I verily believe, the most wonderful ever accorded to any man in the purely political sphere.

Before he left London I had seen and talked with him. It has been asserted that he never reads a newspaper unless his attention is directed to something in one. There are reasons for believing that the assertion is well founded. Perhaps it may account for some of the mistakes Mr. Gladstone has made. It is mentioned here because of an experience of my own with him. In the same week in which Sir Stafford Northcote had announced the dissolution he had brought in his Budget. One of his proposals was to make some alteration in the Death Duties. Later in the week, at the request of Mr. Gladstone, I went to see him in Harley Street. He began to speak of what he should say in his speeches in Midlothian. Among other subjects with which he proposed to deal was, he said, the Death Duties. I asked him if he had considered the

probable effect of Sir Stafford Northcote's proposed changes.

"He is not going to deal with the duties?" said Mr. Gladstone interrogatively.

"Oh yes, he is," I said.

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure; the resolutions he is to propose are on the notice paper."

Mr. Gladstone at once went to a seat on the window upon which his Parliamentary papers were lying, found the notices, brought them to the desk, and turning them over found Sir Stafford Northcote's resolutions.

"That is strange," he said; "I did not know of them."

Then, reading them, he made comments upon them, of which all I can say now is that they were not favourable to Sir Stafford's proposals. It was plain, first that Mr. Gladstone had not heard the Budget speech; second, that he had not read it; and third, that he had not studied his Parliamentary papers. Being out of office, he had not as many secretaries at his service as usual. Your private secretary is, as to many things, the eye and the ear of the busy statesman.

In the Midlothian contest of 1880 nothing but the beginning and the end made much impression upon me. The beginning I have described. The end was victory. Mr. Gladstone had a majority of 211. Some days before the poll, Lord Rosebery had taken a private house in George Street, Edin-



burgh, for Mr. Gladstone. It was not desirable that he should be fatigued with too much driving to and from Dalmeny. Edinburgh was more central. Edinburgh was also the place where the votes would be counted. Mr. Gladstone awaited the announcement of the result in that private house. I was not present when the news was brought to him, but the bearer of it told me that it was received with coolness, not to say coldness. Mr. Gladstone, said my informant, was evidently chagrined that the majority was not larger.

One of the questions that troubled Mr. Gladstone in 1880 was that of the Disestablishment of the Church of Scotland. A band of able men were moving in favour of Disestablishment, and brought pressure to bear upon Mr. Gladstone to induce him to declare for it. The pressure was not successful. In 1885 he had the same difficulty to face. It was not so much public pressure that was put upon him as private representations. He had been requested to receive a deputation of Disestablishers, headed, I believe, by Principal Rainy, the leader of the Free Church. He had consented to receive the deputation. The proceedings were to be private. On the evening before it was to take place I was dining at Dalmeny, and Mr. Gladstone spoke to me about the deputation. My opinion was that it was a mistake to have the interview in private, and I said so. He did not agree with me, but asked my reasons. They were, that if he was going to declare for Disestablishment, the

more clearly that was known to the public the better. If he was not, whatever he might say would be repeated with the perfectly honest though probably inaccurate colouring of the mind of him who repeated it. He said he had no intention of declaring for Disestablishment. I thought then that this was the reason why he had consented to receive the deputation in private. Possibly I was mistaken. He saw the danger to which I had pointed, and asked me what was the remedy short of publicity. My reply was that it would be well to have a shorthand writer present, who would take a full note of the proceedings. The knowledge that a transcript of these notes could be produced would check possible misrepresentations. Mr. Gladstone agreed with me, and said so.

At this moment Mrs. Gladstone came up, anxious that Mr. Gladstone should not over-exert himself, and should retire to his room. He went; but five minutes afterwards Mr. (now Sir) Edward Hamilton, his secretary, came to me on the subject of the conversation. He was all in favour of a shorthand writer being present at the interview the next day, and I undertook to send one. This was done; and I was subsequently informed that the deputation did not like the intrusion, and showed its dislike. The necessity for the precaution was fully proved two or three days afterwards. Inaccurate statements as to what had passed at the interview were put forward in a tentative fashion. Denial of them, coupled with a reminder that there was an authentic record of the

proceedings, served to stop further developments in the same direction.

Before the election of 1885 was over, I had a long talk with Mr. Gladstone, in which some interesting things were said—that is, things that were interesting to me. It was just after the polling had begun. A shooting-party had been arranged at Dalmeny, and it chanced that on the day of the “shoot” I drove over to introduce the representative of a Paris newspaper—a French gentleman of great ability—to Lord Rosebery. We arrived shortly before luncheon, which, for the sake of the shooters, was to be eaten in the cottage of a forester or keeper, within a mile of the house. Lord Rosebery asked me to go to Mr. Gladstone, who was at work in his room, and bring him to the luncheon. I went, found Mr. Gladstone, and we drove to the cottage. As we were leaving the house, a telegram was handed to Mr. Gladstone, which, after reading, he handed to me. It was from Mr. Gourlay announcing that he had been returned for Sunderland. About that time many such telegrams reached Dalmeny House.

After luncheon Mr. Gladstone asked me to accompany him in a walk with Mrs. Gladstone. We set off along the beautiful path by the sea that leads to Cramond Ferry. In my experience I can recall no more interesting conversation. The *Scotsman* had been urging the delegation of Parliamentary work to local-national bodies in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Mr. Gladstone

asked me if I did not think we had gone rather far in urging the creation of such bodies. One might be possible in Scotland ; but what of Ireland ? He showed that what had been said in the paper had been brought to his knowledge ; for he alluded to particular arguments that had been used. My answer was that within the limits that had been suggested such bodies would be safe. He made no comment on the reply.

Then the conversation turned upon other subjects, among them journalists. He knew several, and spoke of them with great care. I asked him if he knew Mr. (now Sir) Edward Russell, the Editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*. He had met him ; but knew him principally as a Shakespearian critic. He spoke of Mr. Russell highly in this capacity, and said of a particular essay by him that it was as good as anything Dowden had done. Indeed in some respects he liked it better. "But," said he, "I am afraid he has a little lost himself in politics. He has, I believe, thrown himself on the side of Mr. Chamberlain and his programme." The allusion was to what had been called the "Unauthorised Programme," and is still known by that name. Mr. Russell had supported Mr. Chamberlain ; but when the Home Rule time came, he went with Mr. Gladstone.

The last time I had a conversation with Mr. Gladstone was in June 1895, on board the *Tantallon Castle*. Sir Donald Currie had invited a large party for a trip on board that fine ship to the opening of the Kiel Canal by the German Emperor. Mr. and



Mrs. Gladstone were of the party, which included Lord Welby, Lord Rendel, Sir Algernon West, Mr. George Armitstead, Sir Joseph Pease, M.P., Mr. Henry Gladstone, Sir John Leng, M.P., Sir William Dunn, M.P., and Mr. T. C. Bolton, late M.P. for Stirlingshire. These might be taken as representing one side of politics. On the other were Mr. Cuthbert Quilter, M.P., Mr. Ramsay, then M.P. for Forfarshire, and several others whose names I do not now recall. Sir Donald Currie was the best of hosts. The entertainment was princely in its character ; the cruise was one long pleasure.

On Saturday the 22nd June, the *Tantallon Castle* was at Gothenburg. There two telegrams reached Sir Donald Currie, telling him of the defeat of the Rosebery Government on the previous night on the Ammunition vote. To me, whose predilections were for the Unionist cause, nothing could have been more amusing than the consternation which this news created on the side of the friends of the Government. They were at no pains to disguise their vexation. What did the defeat mean ? they asked. It would have meant little or nothing if the Government had not desired to be relieved from office. My opinion being asked, I said that in ordinary circumstances the work of supply would have gone on ; but as the Government had moved to report progress after the defeat it seemed that they meant to give up.

All the rest of the day there was uneasiness among the Ministerial section of our party. They could not talk of anything but the defeat. Gothen-

burg evening papers were bought, and desperate efforts made to translate or to have translated their telegrams from London. Alas! those telegrams told little or nothing more than had been told in the messages to Sir Donald Currie. That night we sailed for home, and all through the lovely June Sunday at sea there was nothing talked of among the politicians but the defeat. We all attended church service; but I am afraid that many minds were wandering from the prayers and psalms and hymns to the political situation. That certainly was not the case with Mr. Gladstone's mind. He was engrossed in the service. Nothing could divert his attention from it. There may have been one or two others of the congregation who were similarly absorbed; there could not have been more. What course would the Government take?—that was the problem every politician present was trying to solve.

Early on Monday morning we arrived in the Thames, and still in doubt prepared for breakfast. I had gone into the saloon in the expectation that some news might have arrived. All through the cruise I had been careful not to obtrude myself on Mr. Gladstone's privacy. Truth to tell, I thought his friends troubled him more than was necessary or desirable, and that it was kindness not to increase the intrusions upon him. On the Monday morning, Mr. Henry Gladstone came to me and asked me if I had any objection to see his father. Certainly I could have none. Mr. Gladstone was sitting at the lower end of one of the long tables. We

went to him, and Mr. Henry Gladstone mentioned my name.

"How do you do, Mr. Cooper?" said Mr. Gladstone. "It is a long time since we last met."

"It is, sir."

"I am afraid we have been much parted since then?"

"I am afraid we have."

"How long is it since we last met?"

"Nearly ten years, I think. It was at Dalmeny during the general election of 1885. We had then a long walk together in the woods."

"Yes; I remember. Have you had any further experience about Aberdeen hats?"

This was an allusion to a story I had told Mr. Gladstone in 1885 or earlier as to the largeness of Aberdeen heads and consequently of Aberdeen hats. He had used the story in at least one of his speeches years before. Perhaps that was one reason why he remembered it now. He went on to tell me other facts he had gathered about hats, as—

"I hear that the commercial travellers send the large hats they cannot sell elsewhere to Aberdeen."

"I did not know that."

"I also hear that the next largest hats to those for Aberdeen are required for Wigtownshire."

"Indeed; I did not know that. Of course you know that in another respect there is a similarity between the North-east and the South-west of Scotland?"

"Ah, yes. You refer to illegitimacy."

"Yes."

"Well, perhaps there is a racial explanation of both facts."

Then, turning the subject, Mr. Gladstone said—

"I am sorry I have not had an earlier opportunity of talking with you while we have been on board this ship. My imperfect vision, though it is helped by the spectacles they have given me, prevents me from recognising faces, except of those who are always about me."

"Mr. Gladstone, I have not been willing to intrude upon you."

"I wish you had. I am an old man, conscious that I stand on the verge of the grave, and I should have liked to tell you that though political affairs have now little or no interest for me, I have been impressed by the honesty of purpose with which you have conducted your paper. I do not read many newspapers, and have not done so for some time; but particular matters in newspapers are brought under my notice, and what you have written has often been brought before me. We have differed. I could not agree with you. I think you have been wrong; but I have been impressed by your straightforwardness and earnestness in enforcing your views. Perhaps if there had been as much straightforwardness in other quarters it would have been better."

"I cannot say, Mr. Gladstone, how deeply I feel your commendation. Let me thank you for it with all my heart. But I have no right to occupy your attention longer."



"Well, I suppose we must go to breakfast ; but I am glad to have had this opportunity of renewing our acquaintance and of assuring you of my respect."

"Thank you. I need say no more."

Indeed, I could not have said more ; I was well-nigh overwhelmed by what Mr. Gladstone had said. The commendation he gave me was as unexpected as it was generous. We shook hands and parted ; and since that day I have not seen the aged statesman again.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

The Home Rule Question—Necessity for some devolution—Opponents of local-national bodies, afterwards Home Rulers—A dinner incident—Edinburgh's return in 1885—Sir George Harrison—His death—Mr. Childers—The Parliament of 1885-86—Political information and how to use it—Information from Mr. Childers—Sketch of draft Home Rule Bill published in the *Scotsman*—Consternation among Liberals—Mr. Gladstone's personal influence—The *Scotsman's* attitude—Painful recollections—Accusations and invitations—A curious mission—Mr. Childers as a correspondent—His inconsistencies—His objections to the Home Rule Bill—His action in its favour—Party fears—Other objecting statesmen.

A MAN who has been engaged more or less closely for half a century in the discussion of political questions, and who during a great part of that time has been in contact or communication with politicians, may be excused for thinking the Home Rule epoch one of peculiar interest. For within the half-century there has been nothing like the breaking down of political dams and the letting out of political waters that has been seen since the general election of 1885. An old party was shattered, a new party has risen on its ruins. Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886 broke up the Liberal Party and gave birth to the Unionist Party. Men who had worked

against each other all their lives were thrown together and have worked hand in hand for the maintenance of the Union. Such a break-up or change has not been seen since Sir Robert Peel took up Free Trade; and his action then caused far less rupture of old ties and far less change in political parties than have been caused by Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule movement.

All this is merely history. No one can doubt its accuracy. But it is not the whole truth. Behind the patent facts of the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1886 there are the motives of those quondam Liberal politicians who followed Mr. Gladstone. It is not for me to be the judge or to affect to be the judge of those motives. But it is permissible to state some facts which, if they do not throw a light on motives, may help to an understanding of the wonderful power exercised by Mr. Gladstone.

From the time of the appointment of a Secretary for Scotland—an appointment which had been far too long delayed—the impression that there must be some devolution of the work of Parliament had strengthened in my mind. The agitation that led to the appointment of a Secretary for Scotland had brought out many proofs that requisite legislation for Scotland could not be obtained from the Imperial Parliament. If a local-national body were created that could frame measures and get them into shape, the Imperial Parliament might sanction them. This would relieve Parliament and give Scotland more attention.

Let it be remembered that I am not arguing, but only stating my impressions before 1886. It seemed to me that such a plan if applied to Ireland would meet all requirements that were consistent with the maintenance of the Union. Therefore the consideration of the plan was urged upon politicians and the public. It was not then actually formulated. Not until 1887 did I put it into something like exact shape. Subsequently Lord Rosebery publicly said it "well might be a charter of Scottish Home Rule." Previous to 1885 it had been sketched; and many men who later threw in their lot with Mr. Gladstone and his Home Rule Bill, addressed remonstrances to me.

One evening, I think it was in April 1885, I was dining with Mr. George Armitstead in Cleveland Square. Mr. Chamberlain was one of the party, Mr. Mundella was another. If I am not mistaken, Mr. Bryce and Mr. H. H. Fowler were also there; but of this I cannot be sure. After dinner, talk—all political—turned on the Nationalist demands for Ireland. Mr. Chamberlain and I insisted that there ought to be a delegation or devolution of work to a local-national body in Ireland. Mr. Mundella would have none of it. A reform of municipal institutions was desirable, he said; to go further would be most dangerous in Ireland. Twelve months later he was with Mr. Gladstone supporting an actual Parliament for Ireland. Mr. Chamberlain was opposing such a Parliament; and so was I. Our plan—for we agreed, I believe, in all essentials



—involved direct and absolute control by the Imperial Parliament. Without that—Separation.

At the general election in November 1885—the first under the extension of the franchise in the counties, and under the new Redistribution Bill—Edinburgh, made into four divisions, had returned four Liberal members—Mr. Goschen, Sir George Harrison, Mr. John Wilson, and Mr. Buchanan. Sir George Harrison, who had been Lord Provost of the city, and who was one of the shrewdest and most genial men I have ever known, was returned for the Southern Division. Nobody at that election had dreamed that such a measure as the Home Rule Bill was in contemplation of Mr. Gladstone or of any member of the Liberal party. There cannot be a shadow of doubt that Sir George Harrison never thought such a measure possible. If he had lived, it is certain that Edinburgh would have voted in block against the first Home Rule Bill. Mr. Goschen, Mr. John Wilson, and Mr. Buchanan did vote against it. Unfortunately Sir George Harrison had died before Parliament met. The question then arose who was to succeed him. He had been opposed as being too moderate; were the moderate men or those who were, as they said, more advanced, to choose his successor? Moderation won the day. After much preliminary difficulty, Mr. Childers, who had lost his seat at Pontefract, came forward. He and I became pretty close friends. He was returned after having defended some measure of Home Rule for Ireland, which I

thought was on my lines, and which nobody thought was on the lines of the Bill subsequently brought in by Mr. Gladstone.

Everybody knows that Mr. Childers was included in the Government that came in after the election of 1885. Before Parliament met it had become known that Mr. Gladstone meant to deal with Home Rule. The position was peculiar. At the election the Irish Nationalists, under the direction of Mr. Parnell, had supported the Conservatives—not from love, but avowedly for the purpose of making any majority independent of Irish votes impossible. The result of the election was a victory for Mr. Parnell. There were 335 Conservatives and Parnellites, and 335 Liberals following Mr. Gladstone. Everything depended, or seemed to depend, upon the way the Parnellites gave their votes. When it became known that Mr. Gladstone was preparing to deal with Home Rule, he got the Parnellite votes, and Lord Salisbury's Government went out of office, beaten in the House of Commons.

There was no reason to doubt that the *Scotsman* would be kept well-informed of the doings and intentions of the new Government. Apart from other sources of information, Mr. Childers could, I thought, be relied upon to take care that we made no mistake by reason of erroneous news that might be furnished to us. This statement indicates a principle upon which I have always acted in editing the *Scotsman*. Never have I published or allowed to be published statements as to facts

or intentions made known to me by statesmen, or other men, without their consent. "Tell me all you can or choose to tell. It will keep me from going wrong as to facts; it will not be published without your consent." There is no exaggeration in saying that hundreds of times I have seen in other newspapers statements as to Ministerial intentions or individual movements about which I have known often weeks before. In the case of Mr. Childers no difficulty arose. What he wrote privately was kept private by me. What was published on his information was published with his authority.

No sooner was Mr. Gladstone seated in office than he began his self-imposed task of drafting a Home Rule Bill. Rumours innumerable flew about; they were all mere guesses so far as they related to the provisions of the Bill. Not until the measure was submitted to the Cabinet was anything definite known, and the first authentic sketch of the purport of the Bill was given in the *Scotsman*. Kites had been flown: some, perhaps, with intent; but the public had no means of knowing what Mr. Gladstone had prepared.

From time to time Mr. Childers wrote to me, giving his impressions of what the Bill would be. He promised that as soon as it came before the Cabinet, I should know what it was, and a cypher was arranged in which he could telegraph information to the public.

On 28th March the information came at the

moment that the announcement was made of the resignations of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. (now Sir) George Trevelyan. They had resigned because they would not accept Mr. Gladstone's measure. There had been a Cabinet Council meeting on the previous Friday, when the Bill was produced. In the London Letter of the *Scotsman* on Monday, 29th March, the following passages appeared :—

I believe you may accept as correct the following partial description of the scheme as it was presented to the Cabinet on Friday last :—

1. It proposes to create a Parliament for Ireland, with some provision as to the rights of minorities.

2. It proposes that Ireland shall cease to send members to the Imperial Parliament.

3. It gives to the Irish Parliament full control over Irish financial and fiscal affairs. It will thus enable that Parliament to settle the customs and excise duties for Ireland. By this power the Parliament can establish a system of Protection in Ireland, if it chooses, though I believe provision is made that there shall be no differential duties.

4. It gives to the Irish Parliament the power of having a separate currency for Ireland, if it chooses to do so. One result of this would, of course, be that dollars and cents would become the currency in Ireland.

There are many other provisions which will equally confer upon the Irish Parliament Imperial powers. I need scarcely say that there is extreme unwillingness to believe that Mr. Gladstone really intends to produce such a scheme as this. Even those who are his firmest supporters outside the Cabinet are staggered by the propositions as far as they know them.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the consternation which this announcement created among Liberals in Scotland. Several men publicly declared that if the description of the Bill was correct they could not



support it. Scores of earnest politicians came to me and made like declarations. Kindly contemporaries of the *Scotsman* suggested, and indeed asserted, that the statement as to the provisions of the Bill was untrue. It was, they said, a concoction. All these accusations and all the unbeliefs did not affect me. I knew my authority. Every word that had been printed—even the comments I have quoted—had been sent to me by Mr. Childers, and I was certain he would not ask me to publish what he knew to be inaccurate.

The suspicion has often arisen in my mind that the statement had been given to the *Scotsman* for one of two reasons, and possibly for both. Either it was desired to see how the country would accept such a measure as that sketched; or it was hoped that an outcry against it would induce Mr. Gladstone to modify his Bill so as to enable doubtful colleagues to support it. There was the outcry. The Bill was modified in some respects—as in regard to customs and currency. Many of those who had denounced the whole scheme, used the modifications as a salve to their consciences, and supported Mr. Gladstone.

Never within my knowledge has the personal influence of a statesman been more completely and astonishingly demonstrated than in regard to Mr. Gladstone and his Home Rule Bill. When the measure was introduced, the *Scotsman* opposed it. Naturally I was anxious to know what view the people took of it. To that end I got a couple of men whom I could trust—working-men—to go into

the workshops in Edinburgh and hear what the opinion of the workers was. They had no difficulty in assuring me that 90 per cent of the working-men were against the Bill. When the election of 1886 came, nearly 90 per cent of the working-men in Edinburgh must have voted for Mr. Gladstone and the Bill.

A more painful time than that between the production of the Bill and the end of the general election which followed its defeat I never experienced, and hope I never shall experience. There were many political friends with whom I had been more or less closely associated for years who accepted the Bill and supported Mr. Gladstone. I thought them wrong; but it never occurred to me to judge them harshly. Some of them were not equally considerate of me.

Lately I have been looking over some of the letters I received at that time, and even now they give me pain. I was told that the course taken by the *Scotsman* in opposing Mr. Gladstone was much commented upon, and not favourably. Why should I thus leave old friends? What influence had been used to make the *Scotsman* take up the Unionist position? Nobody believed that its course was purely disinterested.

It might have been sufficient to reply that those who suspected backstairs or illegitimate influence must be themselves in the habit of exercising it. The accusation that was suggested was too contemptible to be touched. But it was possible to say that,

denying the honesty of no man, my honesty ought not to be denied. Never in its career had the *Scotsman* been at the beck and call of statesmen or politicians ; and, so far as my influence could go, it never should be.

One prominent statesman, a supporter of Mr. Gladstone, wrote me a letter in which he warned me of the consequences of the course the *Scotsman* was taking. It would lose its influence, and I should be ostracised so far as the Liberal party was concerned. My reply was that if the *Scotsman* was to lose influence by being honest, the sooner the influence went the better. If I was to be ostracised for acting conscientiously, ostracised I would be.

While the election of 1886 was in progress, and Mr. Gladstone was in Edinburgh, I received a call from an old friend who had attached himself to the Home Rule cause. He was not, and never had been, a Member of Parliament. He was not a private secretary to anybody. But I knew he was on most intimate terms of friendship with Lord Rosebery, and I knew he was seeing and talking with Mr. Gladstone every day. He came, he said, to ask whether, if Mr. Gladstone consented to any modifications of the Bill, the *Scotsman's* opposition to it would be withdrawn. Would I say what changes would induce such withdrawal? My answer was, that nothing but a change in the very principle of the measure could reconcile me to it. In my opinion, it meant Repeal of the Union. As long as a separate Parliament for Ireland with full powers

was insisted upon, the Bill must be opposed. My visitor argued; but it was in vain. At the time when the intended provisions of the Bill had been published, he had written to me insisting that such a measure must be opposed. For reasons of his own—doubtless sufficient—he had changed his mind and had thrown himself on the side of the Bill. I reminded him of the fact, and received for reply that the interests of the party must have his first consideration. I told him the party was being destroyed. He did not agree with me, and went away professing sorrow and disappointment at the answer I had given him, which, he said, would be heard with great regret by those with whom he was in communication.

Nothing is further from my mind than to suggest that my friend and visitor had been delegated to try and make terms with me. All I know is, that he came as I have described, proposed what I have told, and asserted that my views would have weight at what he spoke of as headquarters. It would serve no good purpose if I were to suggest by whom he was sent. He did not come of his own motion; he said he did not. It was a foolish errand, though it had a side that was not uncomplimentary to me.

At the general election of 1886, Mr. Childers was again a candidate for the Southern Division of Edinburgh. From the inception of the Home Rule Bill he had been a frequent correspondent of mine. The whole question had been threshed out between us. The funny feature of the correspondence, or



rather the two funny features, were—first, that he always professed to agree with me, and yet remained in the Government ; and second, that he wrote as if his counsels were most influential in the Cabinet, and yet the Bill was not modified after the first amendments in it. The proposals as to customs and currency which were originally in the draft of the Bill were withdrawn : Mr. Childers very plainly suggested that this was done at his instance. From information that has reached me since, I am inclined to believe that his was not the master-hand in procuring amendments and omissions. He acquiesced in the amendments ; he did not originate them—at least at Cabinet Council meetings. In saying this I am but repeating what has been told to me by Ministers who were the colleagues of Mr. Childers in the Cabinet when the Bill was discussed ; that is to say, after Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan had resigned.

Presumably all of us have our special vanities. When some kind power gives me the gift of seeing myself as others see me, I have little doubt the view will reveal faults and follies of which I have not thought myself guilty. In like circumstances Mr. Childers would have had a curious experience. He persistently spoke of his influence in the Cabinet as if it were supreme. He never was second in anything. Mr. Gladstone relied upon him for advice ; the other members of the Cabinet came to him to help them out of any difficulties into which they might have got. All this was hinted in mysterious

fashion, in the gentlest of accents, with a certain deferential air, yet with unmistakable firmness. At first it impressed me; when it did not produce anything, I am afraid scepticism came.

Several times during the general election of 1886 Mr. Childers came to me. I was on the Unionist side; he was on the side of Mr. Gladstone. At that time it was doubtful how the elections in Edinburgh would go. Soon it appeared that the majority of the electors would yield to Mr. Gladstone's influence. Mr. Childers was not sure they would do so—at least he was not sure in the early days of the contest. All the time, in talks with me, he was expressing his regret that Mr. Gladstone had brought forward the Home Rule Bill, or that he had made it what it was. Again and again my visitor assured me that he was much more nearly in agreement with me than he was with the Home Rule Bill. All the same, he defended the Bill in public, and kept to Mr. Gladstone's side. Once I pointed out the apparent inconsistency of his talk and of his action. He replied that while he thought the Bill bad and Mr. Gladstone wrong, he was afraid of great evils springing from secession. No seceding party had, he said, ever been able to maintain its existence in British politics. He instanced the Peelites—some of whom went one way, and some another: they formed no lasting party. It is not desirable that I should here repeat the arguments which I used against his position. The impression produced upon me was that Mr. Childers saw the right, and still

the wrong pursued, because he did not think Unionist Liberals could form a party that might get into office. In short, he looked at the whole question from what may be described as the official point of view.

Mr. Childers was by no means singular among the colleagues of Mr. Gladstone at that time in expressing dislike of Home Rule and dissatisfaction with his policy. It is nothing now that some of them had at the election of 1885 denounced schemes of local-national devolution. The point is, that after the Bill was introduced, and frequently in the years since, I have heard from their own lips condemnation of the whole policy of Home Rule, and especially of Mr. Gladstone's share in it. They have not said these things on public platforms.

## CHAPTER XXIX

Danger of doing kindly deeds—An instance—Sir William Harcourt and Scottish Liberal members—Complaints against them—Mr. Marjoribanks—Urging him to political endeavour—His success—His place in the Government of 1892—Lord Randolph Churchill—My meetings with him—His criticisms and his confession—Sir William Harcourt on consistency—Sir George Campbell—A story of him—Lord Young and some sayings of his.

A CYNICAL philosopher has told us to beware of kindly actions. When they are done to individuals they often, indeed almost always, lead to unpleasant returns to oneself. It is no part of my desire to endorse or justify the cynicism. Scarcely can it be said to have originality. Is there not a superstition in Cornwall, and elsewhere along our coasts, that if, in case of shipwreck, you save the life of a drowning man, that man will do you serious mischief before you die? There is the idea of the philosopher in an exaggerated form. Still most of us would, I think, not be deterred by fear of possible consequences from doing a kindly action. It is true that such actions are not always without after-experiences more or less troublesome. Very often one helping leads to the demand for another. In other cases



you may find that you have given to some one the opportunity of opposing you, or perhaps have stimulated him to indulge in opposition. Still, the hope may be indulged that no man will be deterred from kindness of intention and action by the consideration that possibly he may find the result is not all that he expected, or rather that possibly it may lead to results that he neither expected nor desired.

This train of thought has arisen in my mind because of several experiences in the political sphere. Some years ago I was asked by the Liberal managers in a certain constituency in Scotland to find them a candidate. There was every reason to believe that if the man chosen was a good man the seat would be won, and would be held. I sought for a good man, found him, recommended him to the managers, and he was chosen as a candidate in preference to several others who were willing to come forward. He was elected, and, as I thought, justified the choice. But when the Home Rule time came, he took Mr. Gladstone's side ; and from that day to this he has been one of the most acute and active assailants of the *Scotsman* and its political views.

Nobody will suppose that I complain of this. The gentleman has as much right to his opinions as I have to mine. His attacks upon the *Scotsman* are compliments, not perhaps in form, but in substance. But clearly if, when I recommended him, I had been guided by the consideration that some time he might be my critic and censor, I should have looked for

some one less able, and perhaps more likely to act independently. As it is, there is much comfort in knowing that my present foe and former *protégé* will adorn whatever position he may occupy in the political future. That he will occupy a high position, I have no doubt.

Another case more or less like to the one just described may be adduced by way of showing that a kindly action may not always have the result that you might desire.

One evening I met Sir William Harcourt at dinner in a country-house in Scotland. He was then Home Secretary in Mr. Gladstone's Government. It must have been in the year 1882 or 1883. After dinner, talk was a good deal engrossed by Sir William. Suddenly he opened out upon the Scottish Liberal members of the House of Commons. None of them was present. The diatribe was Ministerial and general. Sir William sweepingly asserted that the Scottish Liberal members were utterly useless. They were of no service to the Government. They could do nothing to help it when it was attacked. The Conservative members were, he declared, worth far more than the Liberal members. They could do something; the Liberal members could not. "Look," he said, "at Mr. Campbell" (the member for Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities); "he can get up and help the Opposition with a speech that is sensible. There is not a man on our side from Scotland who can do the like. If we had men like him we should have something to boast about."

All this, and much more, was listened to with amusement. I ventured to suggest that the condemnation was too sweeping ; that there were able and efficient men among the Liberal members, and I mentioned two or three names. Sir William would have none of them. He positively waxed indignant, or at least he spoke in tones that were indignant, when the suggestion was made that Scotland had chosen some capable representatives on the Liberal side. To me it was all most amusing, and I confess it would have delighted me to extract more denunciations from Sir William ; but my host gave me a warning look, and the subject passed away for the time.

There could be no doubt that at the bottom of Sir William's censure there was some truth. The Scottish Liberal members did not distinguish themselves in debate. Many of them showed no sign of a desire to do anything. I thought this was a pity, so far as some of the younger men were concerned ; for it seemed to me that if they were going for a political career they should learn to wield political weapons and practise with them. Filled with this idea, I wrote to Mr. Edward Marjoribanks, now Lord Tweedmouth. He was then member for Berwickshire. I believed he could do political work if he would, and I tried to stimulate him to effort. Thus I told him what Sir William Harcourt's opinion of Scottish Liberal members was. (Let me say that in doing this I violated no confidence : Sir William had declared that he wished the members

could know his opinion.) I told Mr. Marjoribanks that there was some truth in what Sir William said, and added that it was a shame a young man like him did not put himself forward in the House. He pleaded modesty ; I urged ambition. He promised to see if he could do anything.

It is not necessary to pursue his political history much further. He began to speak in the House ; he made progress. In course of a short time he became a Whip ; then he burst into the full glory of a Cabinet Minister. Since 1886 he and I have been in different political camps. He has done his utmost to oppose views the *Scotsman* has advocated, and he has done so with much ability. To slightly alter Pope,

What great results may rise from trivial things,

Sir William Harcourt's diatribe against Scottish Liberal members in 1882-83 made Mr. Marjoribanks a Cabinet Minister in 1894 !

It may be remembered that Mr. Marjoribanks was not made a Cabinet Minister when Mr. Gladstone formed his Government after the general election of 1892. Mr. Marjoribanks had been acting as Whip for the Home Rule party from 1886 to 1892. I can say with the certainty of knowledge that he had worked hard in the House of Commons and in the management of the party's affairs in the country. Few men have ever shown more astuteness and more diligence than he had shown in promoting the Home Rule cause in Scotland. While the election of 1892 was in progress, I



saw him and we exchanged some laughing remarks over the prospect. "If you get a majority," I said, "what office are you going to have—the Admiralty, the Colonies, or what?" "I do not know," he replied. "Perhaps you will take or keep the Whip-ship?" "No, that I certainly will not. I have had six years' penal servitude in the office, and that is enough for me."

Mr. Gladstone got a majority and formed a Government, and Mr. Marjoribanks consented to take the post of chief Whip! The next time we met I laughingly reminded him of his declaration that he never would consent to take the Whip-ship. He admitted that he had not liked to take the post. Plainly he was disappointed; but he said, "Randolph agrees that I have done the right thing in taking it." The reference here was to Lord Randolph Churchill, who was Mr. Marjoribanks' brother-in-law.

It chanced that I only met Lord Randolph Churchill on two occasions. Several times I had been asked to meet him in Scotland, but I had not been able to accept the invitations. At last I met him one evening at dinner at Lady Jeune's. We sat side by side, and had a most interesting conversation on matters political. I had not admired Lord Randolph in the early part of his meteoric career. It has never been my opinion that politics ought to be divorced from morals. Opposition as a duty without regard to questions does not seem to me to be moral. Lord Randolph began his career by holding and proclaiming a different belief. It was my duty to criticise him

then, and the duty was performed sometimes in very plain language. On one occasion I remember the *Pall Mall Gazette*, then under the editorship of Mr. Frederick Greenwood, quoted a passage from an article in the *Scotsman* on a speech made by Lord Randolph Churchill. The passage was quoted to be condemned as violent journalism. It called a spade a spade. It spoke plainly of the attacks Lord Randolph had made on political opponents. That evening, at dinner at Lady Jeune's, Lord Randolph recalled this incident to my recollection, and said he had no fault to find with the criticism which had been condemned : if he struck out, he expected to be hit back. "Besides," he added, "in those days I did go rather far."

Some time after this meeting Lord Randolph wrote to me, saying that he should be passing through Edinburgh on a certain day, and asking me if I could see him. My reply was a request that he would take luncheon with me at home on the day he named. He agreed to do so, and in due course came. We had again a most interesting conversation, that is to say, a conversation most interesting to me. The best of it came after luncheon in the smoking-room. He smoked cigarettes, carefully packing the tube with cotton-wool. My taste in tobacco is stronger. He spoke of his health, and it was not difficult to see that he was a broken man.

I remember that he talked of public affairs as if he had and could have little more to do with them. Now and then he became animated as he spoke of

prominent public men. He said that he and Mr. Balfour had been good friends, and he added that it was his own fault they had gone apart. He said a good deal about Mr. Gladstone, and insisted that his earliest formed opinions of that statesman had been correct. No man but Mr. Gladstone would, he thought, have ever ventured to take up Home Rule as he had taken it up. There was room, he thought, for an extension of Local Government in Ireland; but to propose to give it a parliament of its own was to go back to the dark ages. Mr. Parnell he admired in a certain fashion: his ability, said Lord Randolph, was great. No more astute leader had headed the Irish Nationalists at any time; but he could not be trusted. This, he thought, was so plain that he could not believe Mr. Gladstone did trust the Irish leader. If he did, then never had any public man been so credulous. This led him to speak of Mr. Gladstone's capacity for what he called self-deceit. Mr. W. E. Forster, he thought, was right when he said Mr. Gladstone could persuade himself of the righteousness of anything in which he wished to believe. "Fifty years hence," said Lord Randolph, "Mr. Gladstone will not have the place in public attention he now has: he will be regarded as a freak of nature, and there will be wonder how it was that he had so much influence in his life, considering what he had done and what he had failed to do."

Then the talk went on to the question of Naval defence, and he told me many facts that had come

to his knowledge about our own navy and the navy of France. This led him to make a most remarkable declaration—"If I had known when I was in office what I know now, I would have cut off my hand rather than have resigned when I did." It was obvious that he was very much in earnest. The avowal led him to say that impetuosity had been his great fault. He jumped to conclusions too readily, he said; and he added that he was very headstrong. Something I said on the subject of consistency led him to insist that in politics what appeared to be inconsistency might be perfectly consistent. He quoted Lord Beaconsfield's defence of himself in the Marylebone contest, when he was trying to get into Parliament. Some one had accused him of inconsistency, and he declared that he prided himself on his consistency: he hated the Whigs, and would do anything to baffle them; that was true consistency. I do not believe that Lord Randolph was prepared to go as far as this; but assuredly he maintained that apparent inconsistency might, in changed circumstances, be perfectly justifiable, and indeed might be necessary.

That was the last time I saw Lord Randolph Churchill. Not long afterwards he started on that journey in search of health which was to end in his death.

The defence of apparent inconsistency in which Lord Randolph indulged in the course of our conversation, reminds me of a story I heard in 1887 of Sir William Harcourt. He was at luncheon in a



house in town where politics might be talked. The misdoings of the then Unionist Government were the chief topic of his conversation. Ministers had undertaken to deal with London Local Government. I believe their proposal for County Councils was before Parliament. Sir William was indignant. These Unionists had opposed his measure of London Government—had fought it tooth and nail; and now they were doing what he proposed to do, and adopting plans which they had condemned when in Opposition. "What has become of consistency?" he asked. "Ah!" said the gentleman from whom I have the story, and who was present, "Ah! Sir William, I don't know anybody who has more right to ask that question than you have." Sir William paused, looked doubtful, and then looked black.

Mention has been made of Sir George Campbell. At one time I saw a good deal of him. I have excellent reason for believing that a pamphlet which he wrote gave Mr. Gladstone the root idea of his Irish Land Bill of 1870. Sir George was unquestionably an able man. I believe that he had a high reputation in India. He was a kindly man in private life; but, alas, in the House of Commons he was a sad infliction. I think it was Mr. Chamberlain who once said to me that the great difficulty in the way of success in the House of Commons was not knowing when to get up, and not knowing when to sit down. Half this difficulty did not seem to trouble Sir George Campbell. As he was always getting up,

he must have hit the right time now and then. But he never knew when to sit down. I once heard Lord Watson tell a story of Sir George. On a certain Wednesday afternoon he was making a speech in the House. Lord Watson, then Mr. Watson and Lord Advocate, was standing at the bar by the side of an Irish member. It was at the time of a colliery accident at Pontypridd by which several men were entombed. There was a good deal of anxiety about their fate. Mr. Watson asked the Irish member, "Is there any news from Pontypridd?"

"No. I've heard none."

"It's a sad business," said Watson.

"So it is," was the reply. "But, begor, it's all the fault of the Government."

"Fault of the Government! What have they to do with it?"

"Why don't they send down Sir George there? He'd bore them out in half an hour."

I chanced to be at Cairo when Sir George died. He was lying ill in the Continental Hotel. Some days the news was that he showed improvement. Again he fell back, and at last death came.

Lord Watson, whose story about Sir George Campbell has been quoted, is a profound lawyer as well as one of the best story-tellers I have met. There is another Lord—a Lord of Session—Lord Young, about whom many stories are told. He is one of the ablest men on the bench or at the bar, if I may say so without being guilty of impertinence. He is, as I happen to know, one of the kindest of

men. But he is also credited with many maliciously witty sayings, and he is apt to show impatience on the bench. The fault arises, I am sure, from a keen intellect, that sees, or thinks it sees, the real point in any case almost at a glance. One result is frequent interruptions of counsel when pleading at the bar.

Some years ago Sir Charles Pearson (now Lord Pearson) and Mr. Comrie Thomson were in a case before the Second Division of the Court of Session in which Lord Young sits. "Sir Charles Pearson," he said, "the best way to plead the case is for you to read the clause in the Act of Parliament, and put your construction upon it; then for Mr. Thomson to read the clause and put his construction upon it. Then leave us to put our construction upon it." "Yes, my lord," said Sir Charles; "but the difficulty is to get you to listen to the clause." Lord Young had no answer.

On one occasion he was met on the Mound leaving Parliament House before the Court had risen. This was remarked upon. "Oh, it's all right," said he. "The Justice-Clerk is writing Brigade Orders, and Rutherford Clark is reading Greek. Bob Lee is listening to the case. That is enough."

At the time of the general election of 1892 Lord Young was visiting at Dalmeny House. He was there when the results of the elections in Edinburgh were being ascertained. A report came to hand that Lord Wolmer (now the Earl of Selborne) had been returned for the Western Division by a majority of 3

over Mr. T. R. Buchanan. Soon after, Mr. P—— came out and said that the majority was 300. He added that Lord —— and Lord ——, two of the Lords of Session, had voted for Lord Wolmer. “That accounts for the two cyphers,” said Young.

On a September morning some years ago I met him just as he had driven into town from his place in the country. “Hallo!” I said, “what are you doing here? I thought all respectable people were out of town.” “Well,” said he, “have you seen anything to make you alter your opinion? I haven’t.”

Here I stop ; not for want of material, but because it seems to me to be time to write—FINIS.





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